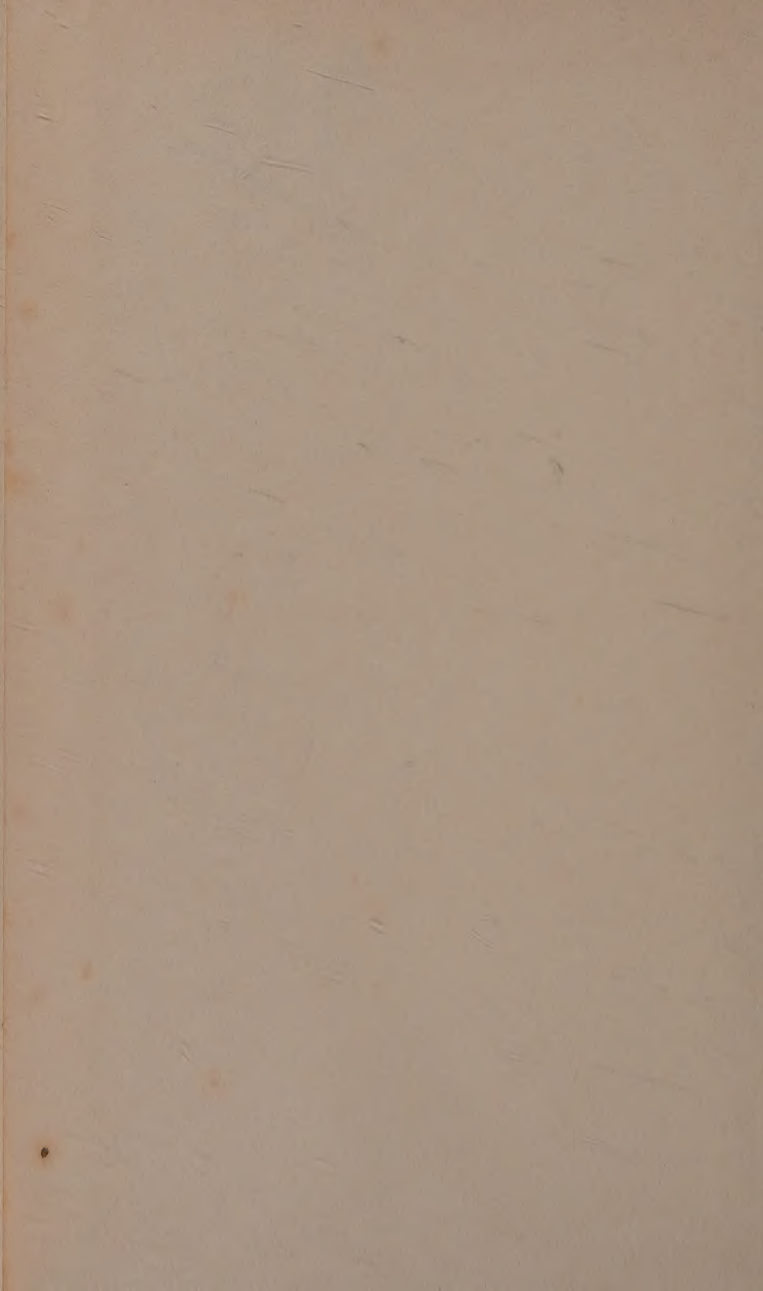


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The Challenge of Christ

By the Same Author

THE DESIRE OF GOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS

CORK UNIVERSITY PRESS AND LONGMANS

THE FRANCISCANS	SHEED & WARD
WHERE IS THY GOD?	SANDS & Co.
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The Challenge of Christ

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London

Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd.

Publishers to the Holy See

NIHIL OBSTAT:

GEORGIUS D. SMITH, S.Th.D., Ph.D.,
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:

✠ JOSEPH BUTT,
Vicarius generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
die 24^a Aprilis, 1934.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
FOR
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.
1934

TO THE
REV. JOHN BURKE
DEAN OF RESIDENCE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
DUBLIN

‘It was the purpose of God’s good pleasure to bring all things to a head in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. . . . For God hath subjected all things beneath His feet and hath given Him for supreme head to the Church, which is His body.’

Eph. i.

PREFACE

I HAVE put together in this volume a series of lectures delivered in University Chapel, Stephens Green, Dublin. Their unity of plan and purpose will be evident to the reader. The whole might be said to contain something, if only a fraction, of what Jesus Christ means to educated Catholics.

To the students of University College, Dublin, I offer this book as a small token of my sincere gratitude for their appreciation, so clearly marked by large attendance and sympathetic attention, on the three successive occasions when it was my privilege to address them. To the Catholic Deans of Residence, the Rev. John Burke to whom the book is inscribed, and the Rev. Dr. M. O'Halloran, I extend my thanks for their unfailing kindness and hospitality.

I also wish to thank the Rev. Fr. Sennan, O.M.Cap., Editor *Capuchin Annual*, for permission to include *Christ or Communism?* and the Catholic Truth Society for kind permission to make use of my pamphlet, *The Immaculate Conception*. A special word of thanks is due to my friend, the Very Rev. Dr. Edwin, O.M.Cap., whose encouragement has been a constant inspiration. To the many others,

nameless necessarily, who listened to some or all of these discourses, I extend my sincere thanks for their kind interest.

FATHER JAMES, O.M.CAP.

ST. BONAVENTURE'S,
UNIVERSITY HOSTEL,
CORK.

October 23rd, 1933.

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THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST

I

ON two distinct occasions Jesus Christ issued the challenge of His identity to His hearers. The response that met His challenge was characteristic. In one instance His question reduced His audience to sullen silence; in the other it drew forth an answer that has become immortal.

The Pharisees stood about Him. Satanic cunning looked out at Him from their very eyes. But He did not flinch. He turned on them, and flung His challenge in their faces. 'What think you of the Christ? Whose son is He?' They replied, 'David's.' How then, argued Christ, does David address the Christ as 'Lord,' saying: 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on My right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool,' if the Christ be merely his son? No answer. 'And no one,' says the Gospel tersely, 'could answer Him a word; neither durst anyone from that day forth ask Him any questions.'¹

¹ Matt. xxii, 46.

The second occasion was at Cæsarea Philippi. This time He was surrounded by disciples. He questioned them: 'Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some, John the Baptist; and others, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.'¹ It was not vanity that prompted this question. Christ knew Who He was. He was equally aware that men, left to themselves, could never discover His real identity. He was simply issuing His challenge to humanity, He was asking the most vital question ever voiced in words, for upon its answer depended the salvation of mankind. 'Neither is there salvation in any other name; for there is no other name under heaven given to man whereby he must be saved.'² That was why He pressed home His question: But whom say *ye* that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Here was the answer that Christ awaited. Flesh and blood could not have brought it forth; the mind and heart of mere humanity could have never thought it. Only One knew who Christ was. And that One, the Father, had pierced the cloud of human ignorance and flashed the answer into the mind of Peter: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'³

'What think you of Christ?' This was the Master's challenge to His contemporaries. He expressed for them the real question that was agitating the mind of every thinking man in Israel. Their fundamental religious problem was this enigma of the Christ. Things were brought to a head by the Master's sudden appearance upon the

¹ Matt. xvi, 13.

² Acts iv, 12.

³ Matt. xvi, 16.

scene. He seemed to spring from nowhere. This man of Nazareth, the son of a carpenter, one loved by the people for His miracles, hated by the Pharisees for His contempt of them, powerful in word and deed, teaching with authority and backing up His teaching by signs—was He truly the Christ? He called Himself the Son of Man. Was He the long looked for Messiah?

We can scarcely, so far removed, appreciate the situation, so tense was it with history, so charged was it with interest human and divine. This people had always hoped for the coming of such a Man. A promise that ran back like a streak of light in the darkness of endless years was their heritage. Abraham had seen 'this day and was glad.'¹ His gladness was handed down from father to son, ever ready to blaze forth in acclamation of the Man of promise. Jacob, blessing Juda, had declared: 'The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations.'² Their history entire was a history of expectation. The prophet Daniel had fired their minds with his vision of the night when he saw 'one like the son of man come with the clouds of heaven. And he came even to the ancient of days: and they presented him before him. And he gave him power and government and a kingdom; all peoples, all tribes, and tongues shall serve him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed.'³ And here in their midst stood a Man who called Himself the Son of Man, who challenged them with

¹ John viii, 56. ² Gen. xlix, 10. ³ Dan. vii, 13-14.

His works and miracles, Who even sent them to their accepted book of life, the Scriptures : ‘ Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting ; and the same are they that give testimony to Me.’¹

But their eyes were filled with other visions ; they literally groped amongst the Scriptures and missed their sense. For when the Christ did come, the Jewish vision of the Messiah had grown distorted. The primitive ideal inspired by God was that of a liberator specially sent. It saw in Him a king descending from David, one filled with the Spirit of God, who would found a kingdom of truth and justice and innocence. Israel would first benefit by this kingdom, but ultimately the Gentiles would not be excluded. In the prophet Isaiah this ancient belief was singularly clear. ‘ A virgin,’ said Isaiah, ‘ will conceive, and bring forth a son who will be called God with us.’² The prophet further relates that this servant of the Most High would tread the wine-press of suffering and sorrow. The manner of His death would depend upon the course events would take about Him, but that He should be a victim was very clearly stated : ‘ Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? And He shall grow up as a tender plant before Him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground : there is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness : and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him : despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity : and His look was as it were hidden and despised, where-

¹ John v, 39.

² Isa. vii, 14.

upon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows : and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed.’¹

But to what avail ? Words such as these found no welcome. Their minds were fascinated by another picture, their blindness was shared by the official priesthood of the time, and when the Christ came unto His own, His own received Him not ; they were awaiting a prince who would rescue them from the heel of Rome and establish them in a temporal kingdom upon the earth. He simply did not fit the picture of their imaginings ; they failed to see Him for what He was.

Three short years He lasted. From the outset He challenged their picture of the Messiah conjured up by prejudice. He showed no signs, even in His greatest triumphs, to found a temporal kingdom. He rendered to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar’s. But in rendering to God the things that were God’s He clashed with the official religion of His day. There was neither life nor spirit in the religion of the Pharisees, He said, but an external legalism that hid rottenness and corruption within. When He comes in contact with these Pharisees His words are barbed and all the time we feel that these men are fighting for their very lives. They had monopolized the Law and put their glosses upon it. But He would let nothing go with them.

¹ Isa. liii, 1-5.

He took the Law out of their hands and said that in Him the Law was finally fulfilled.

In educating His disciples He was wont to call Himself the Son of Man. But He also clearly called Himself the Son of God.¹ When the Jews came to Him in Jerusalem to ask Him again if He were the Christ, 'How long dost Thou hold our soul in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly,' Jesus answered them, 'I have told you, and ye believe not. The words which I do in the name of My Father, these witness concerning me . . . I and the Father are one.' That they understood Him to assert His divine Sonship is evident from their subsequent action. 'The Jews again took up stones that they might stone Him.'²

It is easy to see that the plot is thickening about Him. He claimed to be God's co-equal; He asserted that He was God. But to the Jewish people this was highest blasphemy. Here was a race who had held, almost alone upon the earth, the unity of the Godhead. Their very strength was now to prove their weakness and the undoing of Christ Himself. He would not relent. He was God, and when He stood before the High Priest of the year, haggard and worn by inhuman torture, uttering not a word in self-defence, He was forced again into a final declaration by one who had a right to ask. The high priest said to Him: 'Art Thou the Christ, the son of the blessed God?' Jesus answered: 'I am.'³ From that moment His fate was sealed. There was a rending of garments over such blasphemy. And He who was very God was crucified.

All these happenings are brought together in a

¹ John xiv, 9, 10. ² John x, 31. ³ Mark xiv, 62.

little incident that took place three days after the defeat of Christ. Two men set out from Jerusalem. It was the early afternoon; the setting sun was shedding lustre upon them as they went along. But their mien contrasted strangely with the glowing splendour about them; they were down-cast and dispirited. Their conversation was earnest enough, for they were rehearsing the happenings in Jerusalem. They recalled the rise of the new Prophet, disputed about the events that brought Him before the public gaze, and traced His passage from that first day in the official synagogue when, in the majesty of His mature Manhood, He claimed that in Him was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. Henceforth the eyes of men were upon Him and from glory to glory He seemed to go until that climax of blood on Calvary. It was sad to think that all was over.

The shadow of a Stranger fell upon their path. He spoke to them and with a certain freedom enquired as to the subject of their dispute: 'What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?'¹ Their scorn of Him was thinly veiled as they replied: 'Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days?' 'What things?' asked He. 'And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He who should have redeemed Israel: and now

¹ Luke xxiv, 17.

besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.' But now it was found that the Stranger had also something to say. He took up the old traditions of their people, He indicated the diverging interpretations that obtained concerning this Redeemer, He even suggested the primitive ideal that had been covered over: 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His glory?' In fact He expounded to them the Scriptures. 'And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them the Scriptures, the things that were concerning Him.'

The time quickly passed. They found themselves at the parting of the ways. Their destination was in sight. The Stranger made as if He were going to leave them. But now their curiosity was thoroughly aroused, new hopes began again to stir within them, they felt a strange elation. 'Stay with us,' said they, 'because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent. And He went with them.' They sat at table. He took the bread and broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly their blindness fell from them. They recognized Him in the breaking of the bread. They *saw* Him. And then He vanished. But the feeling of His presence lingered: 'Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke on the way and opened to us the Scriptures?'

These were the disciples of Emmaus. They are a type. Their faith in Christ had suffered eclipse until He came to them in burning words that touched their hearts. But the road to Emmaus is the road of life. Sooner or later the shadow of Christ falls athwart the path of every thinking man.

Men may evade Him for a time, they may even let Him go. But within their hearts there is a disturbing presence. The challenge of Christ is not of yesterday or to-day, it is of all time. We cannot classify Him. He stands alone, unique. For Christ is religion, the union of God and man and of man and God. His challenge is the clamorous call of religion that issues up from the depths of life, the call heard in every age and every clime, the piercing cry that may be muffled but never fully stilled. For the problem of human life *is* the problem of religion.

II

Life is certainly a challenge ; it is filled with possibilities of good and evil. But if the problem of life in all its amplitude is one with the problem of religion, then the challenge of religion is as direct and as imperative as that of life ; it can be evaded only at the cost of shirking life itself. Frequently we hear the phrase 'religious indifference.' If that means indifference to religion, there is no such thing. Everybody is for religion or against it ; there is no neutrality. Men may put religion out the front door, but it enters in again through some hidden back door of their minds. Men may forsake the Churches, but religion does not relinquish its grip on them. Men will discuss religion in their cups and seek oblivion, but the moment their minds awaken they are staring into its face again. Even the declared indifferentist, the man who has proclaimed that he has done with religion, cannot possibly live up to that statement or down to it. That is to say, he cannot succeed unless he has

totally shirked the human duty of thinking. If a man can so atrophy his mind that he can think about nothing, he can avoid thinking about religion. But he is existing then, not living, for an active mind can no more keep away from religion than it can from thinking. The denial of religion has scarcely left its opponent's mouth when the affirmation of it is hot upon the heels of its denial.

But when religion is not denied, its place in life is obscured. People seem to think that religion is an afterthought, something super-added to human life, something not already there in life clamouring for recognition. How they regard this super-imposed thing will vary with each one's respective fancy. Some will have it that religion is a thing created by a crafty priesthood, a delusion imposed upon credulity, an opium administered to dull the sense of wrongs ; they find no basis for it in the life of men. Others will see in it an additional curb, restraint, a burden added to the already weighted load of life. Many think that religion is a private affair, a hobby, an idiosyncrasy ; it does not touch the broader social aspects of human life. But all the time the unavowed postulate at the back of these futile fancies is that life is one thing and religion another, and that life is a thing complete in itself without religion. But if religion is an extra, then dispense with it. If religion is the joy of a crafty priesthood, then let religion to the priesthood. If religion is a thing apart from life, then live without it.

But can a man live a human life without religion ? That is the problem. And the answer is emphatically in the negative. For what is life ? Let us get

behind the bewildering complexity of human life to grip essentials. Fundamentally life is one, its unity is grounded in the nature of man himself. But what is man? Is he not a trinity of knowledge, love and action? He has a mind for knowledge, a will for love, and his body is the instrument and organ of his soul in action. There is nothing more in life in the natural order than what is contributed by spirit and body, by that unity of flesh and spirit that goes to make a human person; and human life is knowledge, love and action.¹

What is it that man seeks in knowledge? Is it not truth? Granted that much time is necessarily spent by men in simply acquiring and learning other men's opinions on life's deepest problems, have we not even in this co-operative research a testimony that truth is the magnet of the human mind? Opinions are just human guesses at the truth of things: they take their value from their proximity to truth. But what is truth, and where dwells the truth of things in fullest splendour? Is it not in God who is Truth Subsistent?

What is it that man seeks in action? What is it that dominates the life of man entire, his every thought, desire and action? Is it not the quest for an object that can satisfy his deepest needs and aspirations? In vain does he look for such an object in the changing universe around him. He must look beyond the world if he is to find the *Summum Bonum* of his life. That *Summum Bonum* is God.

Look closely at human action. See the resistance

¹ See *Life and Religion*, pp. 72 *seq.*, for further development of this.

that it has to overcome. The inner life of every man bears witness to a fatality and a necessity which has been the plaint of thinking men in every age. Life is a struggle. Obstacles have to be overcome. These impediments are lodged within. Human freedom is hardly won, and never is it full and final as long as life stirs within us. There are deep down in us instincts, passions, that make for chaos and disorder. The good we will, we do not ; the evil we will not, that we do. In the grip of this fatality, how will human life achieve its human dignity without appeal to a Power that can heal our anarchy and help us to bring order into the chaos of our troubled lives ?

Turn your eyes now to the arena of our lives, the world in which we live. Do we not seem to see it conspire with that fatality within us ? In high moments it quickens noble feelings in human breasts, but has it not power also to stir in its lair the passion that lies in every human being ? Can it not rise up and thwart our finest efforts ? The man who has never seen the world in which he lives as the enemy of his moral efforts has never opened his eyes. The resistance of the world around us is tragic and titanic ; it can thwart and turn in our hands the instruments of highest thought and noblest endeavour. It is indifferent in its dealings with just and wicked ; Sphinx-like it smiles grimly on both one and the other. The universe around us can resist and crush. Sorrow, suffering, pain and anguish are its envoys, heralds that tell of a final triumph when the earth will claim its contribution to man's fashioning. What man, overtaken by this cosmic greatness in some

impending catastrophe, will not feel the impulse to call upon God in prayer? Was ever woman in travail who did not feel the need of prayer?

No matter where we turn, then, human life is a path that leads to God; it is faced unerringly towards the heights where the typically human values meet in God; its voice is raised to God for help to overcome the fatality that rushes through it from within and to meet the resistance that threatens it from without. It follows that human life can achieve its real meaning only when it is related to God: religion is the key to life.

To God belongs the right of defining and determining the relation that must subsist between man and God. In the nature of things there can be only one true religion. For if God has made a revelation, His word must be accepted. But Christ is God's Revelation to humanity; Christ is God's Solution of life's enigma; the challenge of Christ is the joint challenge of God and human life.

III

Christ in His own day was rejected. The Jews did not accept Him because He conflicted with their preconceived ideas. But that was tantamount to rejecting God's design for human life. It mattered little that this people longed for justice and salvation; they failed to recognize it when it came amongst them. 'I bear them witness,' said St. Paul, 'that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; ignorant of the justness of God, and seeking to set up a justness of their own, they have not submitted to the justness of God. For

Christ is the consummation of the Law, so that justness is for every one that believeth.¹

Have we not here the exemplar of the rejection of Christ by many of our contemporaries? They think themselves free to fashion an ideal of justice all their own; they claim for themselves the right to decide upon the goal of human life. But if Christ is what He says He is, then He must be accepted as the sole Exponent of life's aim and purpose. The only life that is recognized by God is a life that is Christian in its origin, Christian in its rule and law, and Christian in its issue: *in Ipso, et per Ipsum, et cum Ipso*.

The Pharisees also rejected Him because they had lost the very idea of religion and could not recognize it when they saw it. They had severed religion from its moorings in the human spirit, and looked upon mere external observance as the essence of the law. It was hard to hear the truth from Christ who told them that their service was mere lip-service and had no spirit in it. When He went out to condemn their blindness, to scourge them for their interior rottenness, and to call them 'whited sepulchres,' the truth proved too much for them. They saw the crowds go wildly after Him and hatred leaped up in their hearts against Him.

But all included, priests and masses, rejected Jesus Christ for one or other of three reasons that are always present in men's rejection of Him. There were those who were so debased in sin that His very presence in the world was a condemnation of them: these could not accept Him. 'Because the light is come into the world,'

¹ Rom. x, 2.

says St. John, 'and men loved the darkness rather than the light: for their works are evil. For every one who doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved.' A second class was composed of those who feared to accept Him. To accept Him would mean a conflict, a conflict either with the Roman powers or with the Pharisees: they had not the moral courage to face a conflict. A final reason was the immediate pressing needs of their existence which prevented them from taking notice of life's deeper things and of Christ's contribution towards the solution of their most vital problems. They had no time for Him, for one had just bought a farm and wanted to plough it up, another had purchased five yoke of oxen and had all in readiness, another had taken to himself a wife.

Look well at these three great reasons that sever humanity from Jesus Christ. They create the immortal types of men who do not accept His challenge: the men who do not want Him, since His light condemns their darkness; the men who fear to accept Him, lest a conflict with the world or with self ensue; the legion of the occupied who have no time for Christ. To which one of these three great causes do you belong? You have accepted Jesus Christ in theory: you have faith in Him. But is there some black thing in your life that prevents the whole-hearted acceptance of this change that He claims? Are there patches in your life unrelated to Him, places where He dare not enter? Does the darkness of your life conflict with the light of Christ? Or perhaps you are of that second class of people, the people who in

cowardice are afraid to accept Christ's challenge. Are you deterred by fear, fear of the Pharisees who represent the power of public opinion, or more intimately, are you afraid of the demands that Christ will make upon your lives, demands that will send you humbly looking for forgiveness of the past and will impose upon you warfare with your lower selves for the future? The coming of Christ is necessarily a challenge, a challenge to the power of passions within us, a challenge that must engage us in battle with our Christian foes, the flesh, the world and the devil. Or perhaps your place is amongst the occupied. You have no time for Christ. Your studies demand your time, your pleasures. A time there was when men met Christ constantly in the world of knowledge. But things have changed. The modern mind has forgotten what it owes to Christ; it is muddling through its problems without a thought of Him. You may enter the halls of literature, of history, of medicine, of law, and not hear Christ's message: from textbooks the voices of other teachers will strike your ear. Philosophy itself, once so intimately wedded to the science of Christ, theology, boasts its own autonomy and independence. The distinction that an Aquinas made between them has grown into a gulf and separation. Why, the very science of human conduct, Ethics, is treated as if it existed on its own, and as if there was such a thing as a natural goal of life. But there is no such thing. The goal and destiny of human life is not natural, but supernatural. There is but one end of life recognized in fact by God, a vision of God face to face. And because there is but one goal of life

made possible by Jesus Christ, there can be only one true life, one law of life : the model and standard of living laid down by Jesus Christ. That is the challenge of Christ to you and me : Christ is the sole authentic Exponent of life's meaning, law and purpose. Our lives must be linked up with Christ or else forfeit their right to value in the sight of God and to any kind of meaning that is really ultimate or satisfying.

CHAPTER II

WITH CHRIST OR AGAINST HIM?

I

THE Jewish people failed to recognize the Christ when He came amongst them because of their preconceived ideas; He did not fit the picture. The servitude from which they sought emancipation was the immediate pressure of Roman conquest; their eyes were filled with visions of a kingdom in terms of space and time. In the midst of these false imaginings the Baptist stood out strange and sinister, sounding a note of warning and a powerful call to penance. 'Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is He that was spoken of by Isaiah the Prophet, saying: A voice of one crying in the desert: prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.¹ This was a voice sent by God to awaken them to a sense of the deeper servitude that lay upon them. No voice was needed to cry aloud the presence of Roman domination, but deeper than that of Rome was the yoke of Satan that had gnawed its way into the vitals of the life and history.

Who was the Christ? What was His nature? What was His rôle? Little could be known of

¹ Matt. iii, 2, 3.

Him until He was envisaged as Saviour. He it was who had come to liberate the people from the serfdom of Satan and to break the shackles that a false allegiance had forged about them. The kingdom that He would establish would be the kingdom of God on earth, and would renovate the heart and spirit of humanity. 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus : for He shall save His people from their sins.' That was the first word that heralded His coming. When John appeared he was a Voice crying sin and penance as the prelude to the coming of a mightier One, the very Lamb of God. 'The next day, John saw Jesus coming to him, and saith : Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world. This is He of whom I said : After me there cometh a man, who is preferred before me : because He was before me. And I knew Him not, but that He may be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come. . . .'¹ The prophetic reference of John was unmistakable : the lamb in Jewish ritual stood for sacrifice for sin. The Lamb of God was Israel's Saviour in the flesh, and until this people began to look upon Him in relation to sin, they could not recognize the Christ. For He was come to liberate the world from its deepest bondage, the hidden serfdom of sin and Satan.

With such an introduction Christ could not have moved through the world without stirring men to their depths. The spectacle of His life was compelling and disturbing. When He died upon a Cross He witnessed to all eternity the appalling greatness of human guilt, the magnitude of sinful slavery.

¹ John i, 29.

‘They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn.’ Nor can Christ come into the souls and minds of you and me without quickening in us too the burning shame of sin. Our deepest need is a Saviour. If the measure of our need is the measure of our vision, then the more we realize our need the clearer will be our vision of Christ. The world of to-day has almost lost the sense of sin; it cultivates complacency; it no longer calls things by their proper names. A kind of jaunty optimism is thrust upon us that would do away with sin, or look upon it as a kind of theological bogey with which to frighten us. But all this sounds peculiarly hollow: there is nothing in it to give echo to the real depths of life. No gospel will do anything but touch the surface of life which does not deal with sin as a reality.

Sin is a fact, no matter how you explain it, or try to explain it away. And if there is another fact, the reality of which is not less certain, it is that of evil. Sin and evil constitute the ever-deepening shadow, as universal as life and as enduring as history, that falls athwart the path of every human life. No amount of cheery optimism can dissipate that dark cloud. Sin is a fact. We cannot rid ourselves of it until we have faced it. Sin must be acknowledged before it can be removed; it must be looked at before it can be cured. In these days of psychological interests it is of common knowledge that in certain forms of mind-trouble, where patients suffer from various fears, the cure consists in tracking down these fears, unearthing them, bringing them into the light of consciousness to face and lay them for ever. Patients may be uncon-

scious of the secret thing that causes trouble. It may lie hidden away among forgotten things, buried in oblivion. But there can be no peace until the secret trouble is brought to light. It is the same with sin. There can be no real present peace, or security for the future, until sin is faced, condemned, repented.

That sin is a fact is clear enough. But when we pry into its nature we are looking in the face of mystery. Three theories have been given regarding it, that of science, of philosophy, of Scripture. Modern science would look upon sin as atavism, as the conflict of the 'ape' and higher reason, evolved by slow degrees. Philosophy explains sin as the setting up of the finite ego as an Absolute, and in the sin of angels and of men recognizes the common element of selfishness: for the philosopher sin is selfishness, the failure of a finite being to subordinate himself to a Being who is the true objective End of man.

Take these two answers first. It may be conceded to the scientist of evolution, without accepting his hypothesis on all its points, that in certain sins, sins of the flesh, there is a triumph of the animal in man over reason. But the lurid and sensational forms of sin are not always the worst forms of sin in the sight of God. The sins that impede the growth of human life in peace and power, the sins that on last analysis wreck the world, are of deeper hue. Pride of intellect stands at the top of a hierarchy where sins of the flesh are low. There are sins of pride and jealousy and greed, sins of selfish pride and envy and hatred that may not clamour in the streets and yet are deadly. The scientific view will

not stretch to meet these sins, whereas the philosophical explanation fits all the facts of sin in a purely natural order. But sin was always the rebellion of a finite self against God, even before the advent of Christ, and who was deterred from it? The philosophic formula for sin was powerless in the hands of philosophers themselves: as a deterrent from sin it was singularly inefficacious. What abstract formula will come between a man and his sin?

We must open the Scriptures, then, if we are to have a sense of sin. We must do so for two reasons. In the first place, sin must now be judged by faith, not merely by philosophic reason, for we are living in an order of things that is supernatural and based on faith. Seen through the eyes of faith sin is infinitely more appalling than when viewed in the light of reason. In the second place, the only account of sin that will act as a true deterrent and inspire repentance is the vivid light that Scripture lets loose upon it. In the last resort, there is one vision alone that will bring home to us the revelation of what sin is, sins of the flesh and of the spirit, impurity and pride and selfishness, hatred and envy and greed. That revelation is found in the vision of Christ upon the Cross. It was these things coming to a head that crucified the Son of God. That broken body hanging there bereft of all its majesty, limp and wan, of One who was the fairest life and noblest spirit that ever breathed, the very Son of God—that broken body with its blood splashed upon the ground was the work of sin.

That is the kind of thing sin is in your life and mine: sin crucified the Son of God. Can you look

upon Him and not see that? It was for sin He died. Was there any other way of waking up the world but to die, to let sin take its course? Christ need not have died. He was not merely the Victim of a tragedy. He was always Master of the situation, taking up His life and laying it down. He saw the road that led to Calvary and took it. He willed to die for sin, to restore the broken order of things, to show the enormity of it, and to prove God's love and forgiveness. Calvary rolled away the thing that held the human race in bondage. But Calvary is not of the past since Christ began to live anew in us, nor is the bondage of sin entirely gone, as far as we are concerned. For we have it in our power to crucify anew the Son of Man, as St. Paul says, and we can apprentice ourselves to the bondage of Satan. That is what sin is in the living present, a crucifixion of Christ and a transferred allegiance to Satan: the problem of sin is the problem of being with Christ or against Him.

II

While Scripture concentrates on this poignant vision of Calvary as the climax in the history of human sin, it also introduces us to the larger drama of which Calvary was the central act. We cannot fail to see the unfolding of human history as an epic wherein Satan, prince of darkness, played a fundamental rôle. It would be inadequate, of course, to pit Satan against the Christ as opposing forces. Christ is God, Satan is a creature, and we do not accept the Manichæan view of a dual principle of good and evil reigning over the world's history. But if we take a broader view of Christ, of Christ

not only in His natural body, but in that prolongation of Him in His Church, we may well say that the empire of the world is divided into two great kingdoms. The dictum of Christ, 'He that is not with Me is against Me,'¹ takes on its real value then, for when it was argued against Him that it was in the name of Beelzebub He cast out devils, He said: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? They, therefore, shall be your judges. But if by the Spirit of God I cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. He that is not with Me is against Me.'² The alternative for Christians is Christ or Satan, for when we withdraw allegiance from the Son of God we transfer it to Satan. If present sin is present crucifixion, then we break with Christ to cleave to Satan. The world has room for only two kingdoms: the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan.

If this view of things seems strange the reason is that we have lost sight of the social character of Christianity as the Church of Christ, the Kingdom of God on earth. Our religious attitude since the Protestant Reformation is extremely individualistic in character. As a result, we have lost the perspective which reveals the real dimensions of the epic struggle of good and evil in the world. We fail to see Christ as a whole, Christ and His Church, and in that Church the drama of our salvation as it

¹ Matt. xii, 30.

² *Ibid.*, 25-30.

works itself out. Because we have lost this outlook we are thrown back helplessly on ourselves as isolated individuals, buffeted on all sides by temptations that have not the consolation even of seeming Providence, and we find ourselves in the grip of that titanic struggle of good and evil forces which rules the world. Any man who watches his life from day to day has abundant evidence of the power of temptation. He finds he has a natural bias to evil. He is aware of a power that can wreck his life, inimical and omnipresent. Temptation is co-extensive with life itself. In innocent boyhood that power is lurking, but is ready to leap up from its lair with the passage of the years. 'As soon as the senses awake and thought commences to move in the recesses of the human soul, the senses and the heart go straight to evil.'¹ Perverse instincts awaken into life, and with the light of the law the knowledge of evil enters.² Soon vice will rise to course in the veins of the adolescent until it appears unabashed in lives that are impure.³ Sin has been begotten;⁴ and the words of Isaiah come to mind, 'the Lord has no joy in these young men.'⁵

But in this autonomous struggle, which seems to be our spontaneous way of viewing things, we cannot estimate what we have lost. The true perspective is obtained only when we begin to view our individual lives as part of that epic struggle between Christ, the King of light, and Satan, prince of darkness. Christ as Victor and Leader has gone before us. Christ has conquered Satan. Did we possess the real traditional outlook, then we should praise

¹ Gen. viii, 21.

² Rom. x, 13.

³ Job. xx, 11.

⁴ Jer. iii, 25; Ezech. xxiii, 21.

⁵ Isa. ix, 17.

God for redemption, for the victory of Christ already won, and see Christ still in battle with all the forces of a fighting Church around Him. Warfare is God's predestined work for Christians. The emphasis then is shifted from the isolated struggle of the individual Christian. Our gaze is no longer riveted on a purely personal effort against unmatched foes ; salvation is not viewed in the distance as a small isolated crown of glory hardly won. The individual Christian soldier marches on through life in military formation with other members of a fighting Church ; he feels the uplift of their common fight and common aspirations ; the victory ahead is the full blaze of Christ's glory that will fill the heavens.

That this is the true view may be gathered from a glance at the writings of St. John and St. Paul. There are two great kingdoms, two cities, two orders of things : the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. Christ Himself insinuated this when He linked up the advent of His kingdom with the power of expelling demons.¹ When He appeared the evil spirits were heard to say : ' Art thou come to destroy us ? ' ² His victory was the Cross : ' Now is the judgement of the world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ' ³

But Christ gone from earth, the gigantic struggle still goes on. ' For the prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not any thing. ' ⁴ Satan is the prince of this world, and by the ' world ' St. John means the whole spiritual plan of things opposed

¹ Matt. xii, 28 ; Luke xi, 20 ; Acts x, 38.

² Mark i, 24 ; Luke iv, 24.

³ John xii, 31.

⁴ John xiv, 30.

to the light and mediation of Christ or as yet untouched by Christ. The same terminology occurs in St. Paul. 'And you,' said he to his converts, 'when you were dead in your offences, sins wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that worketh in the children of unbelief.'¹ 'For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.'²

Does not this outlook suggest the real meaning of temptation in the lives of Christians? Temptation ceases to be a senseless thing of accident or haphazard. Temptation is no longer necessarily a lower stage of life into which we have drifted. Rather is it a call to action. God is in it. His Providence guides it. Temptation is a necessity for the strength of Christians. Even in this, Christ, the Holy One of God, has set the example. 'Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.'³ Here we have God directly leading Christ into the desert to meet His rival. Christ was so led to show that temptation is part of the divine plan for the Christian struggle. Temptation in itself then is no evil thing: it occurred to Christ Himself.

Here then is the true background for our Christian lives. We have a picture of the ageless struggle of good and evil, of sin and sanctity, in which from the first moment that we breathed life we are involved. Forces, personal forces of good and

¹ Eph. ii, 1-3.

² Eph. vi, 12.

³ Matt. iv. 1.

evil, mixing the struggle, chaotic forces liberated by Satan's first triumph over man join in, but in the centre we see our Leader, Christ, with the standard of His Cross. Satan strives to thwart Him, he tempts Christ's soldiers with his false allegiance. Temptation is intended by God to put us on our mettle and to test us in our stand by Christ. 'He who is not with Me is against Me.'

III

Armed with this new light on the nature of temptation, the Gospel will reveal to us the possible forms that temptation will assume in the lives of every one of us. If temptation is co-extensive with human life, with all life's possible relations, it also follows the upward ascent of life in sanctity. The strength of the Gospel-presentation is that it is large enough to meet all life's demands from depths to heights. That is the reason why the Gospel elaborates the tempting of Christ by Satan, for this three-fold tempting is a parable of dogmatic value.

I have no intention here of cataloguing all human sins, but it is easy to see that they must fall into three broad classes. Man is a trinity of flesh and mind and spirit, and this trinity suggests the possible sources of all temptations. Sins of sensuality prompted by concupiscence take their rise in flesh, not forgetting that in the human composite there is action and reaction between flesh and spirit. Sins of pride, presumption, obstinacy in error, lying and deception, take their origin in the human mind, not forgetting again that flesh may influence the mind,

intensifying its blindness. Finally, there is the human spirit, the self, the united mind and heart, which thirsts for self-assertion, for power, for domination, ruthlessly stopping at nothing, not even murder, to bend events to its selfish purpose.

What anarchy is there not suggested by these forces, all good in themselves, yet strangely powerful for evil. Satan had a hand in liberating these forces of disorder. As man was originally created this trinity of flesh and mind and spirit was held together in unity by the gift of original justice. But the revolt of man against his God, prompted by Satan, brought in its train a revolt of man against himself, and human passions, forces of disorder, made irruption into human lives and spread from human lives into the universe entire. Flesh revolted against human reason; mind rejected the claims of God; one human self aggressively threatened all other selves. These were the forces that shaped and modelled the world before the coming of Christ, and to the eyes of the seer, St. John, 'the whole world was sunk in wickedness and iniquity.'

When Christ came it was as a slave, said St. Paul.¹ He had emptied Himself, as it were, of Godhead. He renounced the glory that was His by right and appeared amongst men as one of themselves. This He did that human nature might participate in the glory of the Godhead, and to indicate the struggle which that entailed, He met and conquered the prince of darkness who had let loose the waters of iniquity over the face of the earth.

It was possible for Christ to be tempted. It is

¹ Phil. ii, 6-8.

true that within Him, as coming from within, there could be no enticement to evil. But endowed with a double consciousness as God and as man Christ could suffer temptation coming to Him from outside Him. In His condescension He allowed that to happen. He was accosted by Satan. The devil tested the calibre of the Son of Man. In quick succession he unsheathed the weapons most likely to injure and to kill. He suggests, in the first instance, that before the time appointed Christ should satisfy His hunger by bread. Satan's appeal to the life of sense is here in evidence. But Christ replied that man lived not on bread alone, in other words, there was more in man than flesh and mere physical needs. When that temptation failed, Satan laid siege to the mind, the intelligence, of Christ. He asked Him to throw Himself down from the pinnacle and hope that the angels would hold Him up. But that was presumption from the human point of view and presumption on the part of human intelligence: it was tempting God, and Christ refused. But a third temptation remained, the greatest of all. Flesh had been conquered, mind had been made subservient to divine designs by the rejection of presumption. But note the crescendo. Once the subjection of the Flesh has been mastered and presumption of mind excluded there is every danger that the human spirit will complacently rejoice in its own mastery, it will feel impelled to dominate the world and lead it forcibly to order and perfection. But the world so filled with iniquity will offer stubborn resistance to moral standards, and the spiritual man is prone to force this evil world to submission. To do that he is

ready to call on divine agencies to do his work, as the simple Apostles would call fire from heaven to destroy the cities that rejected Christ. But to do this is tantamount to admitting that the good is of itself powerless and that evil really is stronger in itself, and that means giving adoration to the principle of evil in the world. And Satan, showing Christ all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, said to Him: 'All these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and adore.' There lay the final and complete test for the human spirit, the choice between its belief in God or Satan, in good or evil. Christ renounced all alliance with the kingdom of evil: 'The Lord thy God thou shalt adore and Him only shalt thou serve.'

But the kingdom of evil had not yet done with Christ. After the temptation, the Gospel says, Satan retired from Him for a little while. But Satan was at work. Christ's victory over sense would be further tested. Everything that sense could bear, sorrow, suffering, death, was heaped upon Him. In Gethsemane we see Christ in the grip of the world's sin. He felt the weakness of His mortal nature, and in that His struggle is full of consolation. He would even let the chalice pass from Him, so weak was He, so unable to drain it to the dregs. But no. His human will was again renounced. 'Not My will but Thine be done.' In this way the kingdom of God in man, surrendered before the assaults of Satan by Adam, was won by Christ in the death which followed. 'Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned. . . . Therefore, as by the

offence of one, unto all men to condemnation ; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life.¹

Does the victory of Christ in the desert seem a sweeping one? Then look at Christ in Gethsemane. But even then His triumph was no less certain. When evil had done its worst, when its gathered forces brought death to Christ accepting, what then? Christ rose again. The Spirit of God laid hold upon that broken body and it shone again with life and power, transfigured. 'Whom therefore they slew and hanged upon a tree, Him God raised from the dead and exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.' But the same Spirit of God is in the Church, the power of Christ resides in a priesthood that is visible, and beneath that power lives, wounded, stained and broken, can rise again, become a new creation, and live with the life of Christ which by sin was lost. The Church lives by Christ ; it is a fighting Church ; it can pick up its members who have fallen by the way, or lagged behind, to re-create them, renew their strength, and carry them in its struggle against the forces of Satan. That is our faith. 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son ; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.'² 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven.' Do not doubt it. God can take us as we are, stained with sin, broken with sorrow, cowed and crushed by the weight of circumstance, if we but repent, confess and ask forgiveness. We do not march alone. The issue is a great one, Christ or Satan, the kingdom of good or the kingdom of

¹ Rom. v, 12-18.

² *Ibid.*, v, 10.

evil. Christ depends upon us. But He is forgiving, too. That is the Christ that you and I accept, a Christ forgiving, a Christ creative, who can and will take up our lives and renew them again with His undying spirit of militant adventure. 'He that is not with Me is against Me.'

CHAPTER III

CHRIST AND WOMAN

I

A STRANGE voice was heard upon the Jordan's banks ; a new prophet had come to Israel. Throngs went out to hear him, for his was a mighty voice that had kindred with wild and living things ; it had been nurtured amidst rocks and crags and in the open spaces of the desert. Strange force and strength leaped out from it, shattering the complacency of sinners, striking terror into the hearts of men and women, mercilessly condemning the shams and hypocrisies that had come to listen. Never had there been a call to penance so loud, so harsh.

Then one day a new note, a note of softness and strange joy, stole into the mighty voice of the Baptist ; the tempest of it seemed suddenly to calm. Amongst the crowd of onlookers there stood One whom they knew not. Down into the Jordan's waters He went to be baptised like others. The heavens opened over Him ; a message came to John. He knew that at last the Man of promise was upon the earth. 'Behold the Lamb of God,' said John, with reverence. And when he spoke again to them the voice rose up in one great wail of renunciation : 'You yourselves do bear me

witness, that I said I am not the Christ . . .’ but it finished on the new note of softness and of joy : ‘ He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled.’¹

In this joy of the Baptist the hopes and aspirations of every Hebrew prophet found their final realization ; John was the last of a long line. Jesus Christ was the Bridegroom of humanity, in Him divinity and human nature were wedded, and He came on earth to take to Himself a bride, His Church. The Baptist knew it. He was simply a Voice, a herald announcing the advent of the Bridegroom, Christ. Now his task was accomplished, and from that moment the voice of John decreased until it was stilled in death.

It was then that Jesus Christ began to exercise the spell of His Personality over the sons of men. He was perfect God and perfect Man, and in that joint perfection of Godhead and Manhood lies the secret power of Christ over the souls and spirits of humanity. Henceforth sex will be incidental in the new economy, and men and women, in regard to Christ, will share the destiny of an immortal personality the goal of which in heaven will be divine espousals. But even here on earth there will be a beginning of the eternal romance of heaven. Men will experience the charm of One whose love is beyond the loves of women. Women will look up to Him as perfect Man and will discover in Him the Godhead.

¹ John iii, 29.

Rapidly events began to take shape. Two men left the company of the Baptist and followed the new Prophet. After a little time He turned to them and said: 'What seek ye?' They answered shyly in the first awakening of their love: 'Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?' He replied: 'Come and see.' They went, and stayed with Him. St. John, writing fifty years later, adds the precious little detail: 'It was four o'clock in the afternoon and we remained with Him until late.'¹ John remembered vividly when this new awakening had come to him.

This was but a beginning. At a call from Christ rough men and hard left their nets upon the sea-shore, and followed; a tax-gatherer left his spoils. A woman whose profession was sin at Magdala finds her way to Him and mercilessly breaks the vessel of her life at His feet until every drop of a sinful past is poured out before Him. Love leaped up in the hearts of little children at His approach and they cried out ecstatically: 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' From glory to glory He traversed the horizon of a new humanity until on Calvary it set in a sky of blood.

This was only a prelude to a more extensive, a greater glory. He rose again. But His resurrection in the minds and hearts of men and women and children was not less striking than His resurrection in the flesh. On Calvary He had won the sceptre from the prince of darkness; He had ransomed humanity from the bonds of Satan. Henceforth the spell of His Personality would go out triumphantly from the confines of His own race and

¹ John i.

country ; time, too, would expand to receive and carry it down the tide of years in undiminished splendour. There has not been a century in which this charm of Christ has not exercised its influence, infusing strength into children in early ages to face death and torture, inspiring maidens to refuse the hand of pagan princes in earthly marriage. The response of St. Agnes to Proculus, son of the Prefect of Rome, is not of the third century only, but of all time : ' Leave me, for I have already another Lover. . . . He has pledged me with the ring of faith. . . . He has set a mark upon me that I may be known as His spouse. Already we are united and His blood is the beauty of my countenance . . . ' Christ still wields His power, that fascination of His Personality which from age to age and in every clime rises menacingly over human families to claim a boy or girl, wrenching them from the loving grasp of parents, uprooting them from the soil of home, breaking every bond that could hold them to the romance of earth and giving them poverty instead of wealth and obedience in exchange for independence.

The world is largely made up of those who fear to find Christ lest possessing Him they shall want for something, and those who fear to lose Him lest without Him they lose all there is. It is only the few who have sufficient vision to realize that Christ is all and to them His call goes forth. It is they who show forth to the world that Christ is satisfying and the sacrifices He demands are as nothing. They discover that they can do without the world's goods ; pleasures of the flesh seem of little value ; their own will becomes embarrassing

to them. There is little logic, conscious logic, in the process. From an early age a girl has felt the attraction of Jesus Christ. A dream of love occupies her thoughts, a dream singularly enlarged and beautiful. If man idealizes woman, I suppose it is true that woman idealizes man. But the perfect man, where is he? The girl to whom Christ has already whispered will not have far to go. Here He is. In some quiet convent she ultimately kneels to offer to Him the burden of her love and life and so renew the gesture of history, the gesture that makes no compromise but offers all to Christ.

It is not for us to look into the heart of such a maiden and measure the cost, or even to surmise nature's anguish as it cuts itself adrift from all that nature clings to with such avidity. All that we can see is the rapture of first love and love's timidity, the fear there is of not being accepted. But one human sentiment need not be wasted on such an individual: she does not need our pity. If she is faithful, Christ can satisfy. The Little Flower in this has made herself the mouthpiece of all who follow Christ: 'I would not have it said that any earthly bride loved her bridegroom better than I have loved Mine,' and her ambition, strongly worded, is the ambition of the humblest novice who has chosen Christ: 'Christ, I would love Him as He has never yet been loved.'

But the world will have its say: Why this orgy of self-sacrifice, why all this waste of young lives? Judas, I think it was, who first uttered a similar objection when Magdalene impetuously smashed the vessel of precious ointment. But, then, that is

the way of love and God would need to make woman differently if she is not allowed to love without limit. Besides, the women who have gone to Christ have not wasted their lives. They have been His ministers down the ages to the needs of humanity with visible hands and more frequently with hands unseen; they have shown that woman's sole *raison d'être* is not motherhood; they have asserted the right of womanhood to a destiny of its own; they have set a standard of moral value that is one of the glories of the Catholic Church.

II

But the title of my lecture is *Christ and Woman* and I am conscious that the perfect sacrifice to which I have just referred is not the vocation of all. I should like, therefore, to suggest to you some general considerations of Christ's attitude to woman and indicate the principles that underlie it.

In our time there is a general discussion of woman and of her emancipation. The nineteenth century has been called *Woman's Century* and echoes of the controversies and propaganda of this century are in the air. Three outstanding works of some importance appeared in England during the period that has elapsed since 1800, and these have served to focus attention on a question which in America and in England was being forcibly brought to public notice by gestures of women seeking for themselves the right of suffrage. Miss Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was one of the first works of importance in the field. For her it has been claimed that she 'spoke the first

word on behalf of female emancipation,' her book being 'the forerunner of a movement which will always be ranked as one of the most important of the nineteenth century.' Some seventy years later appeared John Stuart Mill's *Essay on the Subjection of Woman* (1869). The third writer on this topic was Karl Pearson in his *Ethic of Free Thought*.

I cannot here enter into a detailed discussion of the views put forward by these writers. I am convinced that when Miss Wollstonecraft puts forward the theory that 'the prevailing opinion of a sexual character is erroneous' she is flying in the face of the most elementary philosophic principles of human nature, and when she proceeds to assert that 'the desire of being always woman is the very consciousness that degrades her sex' she is merely revealing an idea of woman that is singularly low. John Stuart Mill, having said many good things, commits himself, in his enthusiasm, to facilitation of divorce and judicial separation as a means of emancipation; he looks upon marriage as 'an equal contract, not implying the virtue of obedience.' It is not easy to see how the spirit of rivalry which seems to inspire this ideal can possibly bring peace or freedom. I do not imagine that any enlightened woman will accept the conclusions of Karl Pearson when in his desire for woman's emancipation he advocates 'free union' instead of marriage and finds the ideal in the history of Lewes and George Eliot.

There is room for differences of opinion then upon this suggested emancipation of woman. Nineteenth century propaganda would lead only to a new form of subjection on woman's part. If

woman is to come into her own it can be only in the light of true ideals. The feminist movement in reality was not prompted solely by abstract ideas of woman's rights. Economic conditions of life that belong to our era played their part. The advent of the Machine age, the general exodus of girls from the hearth and home to offices and factories, the increased difficulties of earning a livelihood, these were factors in the movement which made woman seek her civic and public rights and in particular her title to suffrage. But what I should like to suggest immediately is that the world had not to wait until the nineteenth century to admit the elementary rights of woman. The Church had always recognized woman's right to dispose of her life in accordance with her idea of her personal destiny, and in days when the laity participated in her councils she admitted woman suffrage. In what other institution has woman's intellectual capacity and her power to organize been so clearly admitted? In the Church, congregations of women have been organizing themselves and enjoying suffrage for centuries. When the Reformation came a new outlook appeared. Luther found no other place for woman than a kitchen, and the celebrated Fifty Theses of Wittenberg refuse to acknowledge the real personal dignity of woman. In the subsequent history of Protestantism these things may have been amended, but like many other controversies of our day, the discussion on woman has been possible only because the modern mind has forgotten much of its Christianity. Woman did not come into her rightful place for the first time in the nineteenth century. Her first real emancipation

took place two thousand years ago. Woman's Liberator was Jesus Christ.

I have not here to trace the various conceptions of woman that held sway before the advent of Christ. That history has been written scores of times, and it is agreed that before Christianity woman never occupied her rank as a human person. The combined influences of pagan morals, of philosophy, even of religion, were dead against her. Whether as spouse or mother, woman was looked upon as an object, or at the most as an institution, but very rarely was she regarded as a *person*, that is, as a being with its own proper destiny, its inalienable rights, and its own proper responsibility. Amongst Germanic peoples woman was mere merchandise ; she was sold and bartered, she was offered to guests, she was bequeathed to others by will and testament. Yet Tacitus tells us that the moral standards of these races contrasted strongly with the degradation of Rome. In China she was looked upon as devoid of soul, she was excluded from the Temple, her husband was her god. In India wives were buried alive with their dead husbands, showing that the destiny of a woman ceased to have a meaning with the removal of her master. In Rome things were no better. Normally woman ranked with the goods and chattels of her husband and could be bequeathed by him to another. It is true that pagan poets give us glimpses of woman's ideal beauty, but when it is not mere physical beauty that is praised, as in Catullus, these poets' dreams testify rather to the creative power of their own minds than to any practical reverence of actual living women.

It was Christ who first emancipated woman, and His work was well repaid. 'The general superiority of women to men,' writes Lecky in his *History of European Morals*, 'in the strength of their religious emotions, and their natural attraction to a religion which made personal attachment to its Founder its central duty, and which imparted an unprecedented dignity and afforded an unprecedented scope to her characteristic virtues, account for the very conspicuous position they assumed in the great work of the conversion of the Roman Empire. In no other important movement of thought was female influence so powerful or so acknowledged. In the ages of persecution female figures occupy many of the foremost places in the ranks of martyrdom, and pagan and Christian writers alike attest the alacrity with which women flocked to the Church and the influence they exerted in its favour over the male members of the families. The mothers of St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and Theodoret, had all a leading part in the conversion of their sons. St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, Flacilla, the wife of Theodosius the Great, St. Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius the younger, and Placidia, the mother of Valentinian III, were amongst the most conspicuous defenders of the faith. . . . In the career of asceticism women took a part little if at all inferior to men, while in the organization of the great works of charity they were pre-eminent. For no other field of active labour are women so admirably suited as for this; and although we may trace from the earliest period, in many creeds and ages, individual instances of their influence, in allaying the sufferings

of the distressed, it may be truly said that their instinct and their genius of charity had never, before the dawn of Christianity, obtained full scope for action. . . .’

A superficial reading of the Gospel might at first sight suggest that woman had little place in the life of Christ. Some indeed have appealed to that scene at the Well of Jacob to emphasize the Apostles’ surprise that Christ spoke alone with a woman. But there is nothing in the point. Surprise might equally well have been expressed had they found their Master speaking with a man. The whole question was one that concerned the differences that obtained between the Jews and the Samaritans ; they were not on speaking terms.

The fact is that in the personal life of Christ He makes no real distinction between man and woman. In both He found just human nature shared by both with certain characteristic differences. At the well of Jacob He raised points of doctrine with that woman which as yet He had not expounded to His slow disciples. But for the intelligent reader of the Gospel the fact remains that women play a part in the life of Christ. Taking into account the condition of the times, the remarkable thing is their mention at all. Instead of that, the women of the Gospel seem to walk out from its pages before our eyes as beings of flesh and blood, different types of woman, in fact woman in all her forms. Mothers come to Him with little children in their arms. He makes way for them, takes the little ones and blesses them, and points a lesson to His own initiated disciples. A little girl, the daughter of Jairus, is healed by Him. He goes in alone to

her and disperses the crowd that had gathered. He restores her to health and life. A widow follows the bier of her dead son ; Christ is touched by her misery and gives back her son to her. Then, see that other woman, the eternal woman with an issue of blood, the woman who would hide, the woman who touched the hem of His garment and was healed. In gratitude she raises the voice of eternal motherhood to acclaim in Christ His Mother: 'Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that gave Thee suck.'

So does the procession of immortal types of womanhood move through the Gospel pages obtaining help from Christ and reverence. But is there not more? Do benevolence and reverence exhaust Christ's relation to woman? No. There is something deeper, something that woman craves for as she craves for life. There was love in Christ for woman. He proved it. He risked something for her, and he who loves not knows not what it is to risk. Christ risked His reputation and His honour for the sake of a woman. In this the Master stood out in contrast to the manhood of His time. His contemporaries, as they appear in the Gospel, were men who spurned woman. Guilty themselves, they would make a show of righteous horror: usually these two things go together, so strange is human nature. But the human nature of Christ was not so tainted. On two occasions He gave manhood a lesson in His love for woman.

On one occasion the cunning Pharisees laid a trap for Him. The trap was a woman taken in sin. The cruelty of the Pharisees sought to place Him

in a dilemma. Did He condemn her, He would contradict His known attitude to women. Did He release her, He must offend against the Law which commanded that such a one be stoned. Whom did Christ condemn? The woman? No, but the men whose lives could not justify their condemnation of the woman: 'Neither shall I condemn thee; go sin no more.' Yet, Christ was the Man who could proudly say: 'Who is there among you who will convince Me of sin?' Though sinless He did not condemn the woman. He knew that the man of His time had made woman what she was, a being in bondage and devoid of the sense of responsibility that goes with personal rights and value. He would redeem her from her degradation.

Magdalene also was the occasion for a dilemma. Either Christ knew her or He did not. If He did, why allow this intimacy, as when she washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. If He did not know her for what she had been, then He was no prophet. But Christ preferred the love of the Magdalene to the righteousness of sinful Pharisees. And though the identity of the Marys of the Gospel is the despair of commentators, yet it is a fact that Christ, as the Gospel puts it, 'loved Mary and her sister Martha' and that His first appearance after His resurrection was to a Mary. A woman wiped His Face on that last fateful journey to Calvary; when women pitied Him on His sorrowful way, He addressed a special word to them. When the men had fled, a group of women stood by the Christ. Surely it was a woman's love that inspired Mary to be at the spot where she seemed to see a Gardener. Love is like that; it

has the knack of inspiring one's arrival at the psychological moment. Mary's love was a love of patient foresight.

III

I have been endeavouring to suggest Christ's attitude to woman by indicating the place they occupied in His life and ministry and by those external relations that may be seen in the Gospel-story. The words and gestures of Christ are an index to His deeper attitude and, when He associates with women and moves amongst them, we may be certain that these external relations spring from an attitude of mind. That Bethany was a frequent resort of His would seem evident from the Gospels. The sisters Martha and Mary were loved by Him and He pleased them by the raising of their brother, Lazarus, to life. That everything in the life of Christ was prompted by His desire for the Father's glory does not exclude the fact of His direct and intimate relations to Martha and Mary. Nor does it take any profound psychological insight to see that even Martha and Mary stood on different footings of intimacy with the Master. If upon His arrival Martha rushes out to meet Him, Mary stays at home. Would it be too much to presume that it was her greater intimacy with Him that allowed of that. Mary *could* stay at home and not be misunderstood: it was He who called for her. When that immortal scene took place, which is the delight of all contemplatives, Mary was sitting at His feet, while Martha busied herself about many things. Christ did not listen to the complaints of Martha. He knew the deeper love of Mary, a love

so deep that no action but contemplation could satisfy it.

Clearly the first element in Christ's attitude, as may be seen from this, is that He regards woman as a person, with an immortal destiny of her own. His attitude is not that pagan attitude which lowers her to the rank of merchandise to be bought and sold. Further, He gives no sign of regarding woman as an institution; He does not equate woman with motherhood merely. Did He not on one occasion recognize that there was a higher thing even than motherhood? Who is my mother, my brother and my sister? Those who do the will of God. But the real point is that by treating woman as a person Christ indicated that her personality was her own and was not dependent on any function of life. Woman, in His view, was not made for man if that removes from her the dignity of a personal destiny. On the same reasoning, it could not be said that woman is made to be a mother if that implies that she has no other destiny save to be married and to have children. Woman is not for the family; rather is it the family, like every other institution, which is for the individual. The one supreme value in life is personality. To accord that to woman is to admit that she cannot be essentially subordinated to any man or institution but to God alone. If it is said that the essence of a woman is to be a mother, then why not say that the essence of a man is to be a father? Both are equally absurd, for the simple reason that sex is not the only factor in human nature. Man and woman both enjoy the dignity and value of personality. Admit that and you will find that man and woman remain separate,

independent and incommunicable. Both have equal rights and equal duties from that view-point. Neither can relinquish the burden of personality. What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his immortal soul? That immortal soul clamours for a destiny in a future world where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage where there is neither male nor female in the eternal espousals of God's kingdom.

It is only this frank admission of woman's personality, which places her on a standing of equality with man, that can help us to bring together what we apparently have separated. For if in the kingdom of God there is neither male nor female, then we begin to see in its full dimensions humanity that is the bride of God. Once we begin to see humanity in this light we are in a position to recognize that it is constituted by two sexes, and that these sexes, because they go to constitute the one humanity, cannot in any way be looked upon as inimical to one another. On the contrary, because they constitute they must co-operate in the building up of Christ's mystic body. Any movement that will merely place man and woman in competition with one another has lost sight of the true horizons. God Himself said that it was not good for man to be alone, and when He fashioned Eve it was evident that He intended human nature to be constituted and shared by the two sexes. In this economy woman was to be man's helpmate and man was to be woman's companion. But if they, as two personalities, were to make a success of human nature, then they should take account of the differences that divided them. If their ideal was co-operative

and not competitive it could be realized only when woman was true to her natural capacities and man was true to his. Now if motherhood is not the sole *raison d'être* of woman it is certain that woman's primordial instinct lies in that direction. Woman cannot be the fountain of life and not bear traces in her constitution of nature's purpose and plan. Physiologically she differs from man, and the difference springs just from womanhood as the source of life. But precisely because woman is not body only, but a soul-informed body, a flesh wedded to spirit, physiological differences carry with them the characteristics that are psychological as well. Just as there is a body which is feminine so is there a soul that is feminine also, for the human person is one in nature, substance and personality. It follows that the woman who, in a false idea of emancipation, seeks to be man's competitor and rival instead of co-operator and helpmate, is simply being untrue to the womanhood in her and striving to be a man. But the woman who strives to be a man simply ends by not being a woman.

We associate with man the more active forms of activity, a conquering type of strength, an aggressiveness and a sense of protection that are regarded, even by women, as his finest qualities. But it is woman's rule to love, to give, to sacrifice. Her greatness is not conquering or grasping, it is rather one of inspiring, giving, drawing forth the latent energies of manhood. Nor are these differences the result of long years of oppression; they are grounded in woman's nature. It is true that her rôle as helpmate has at times sunk to low levels, but that was when true religion was not an inspiring

force. Where religion has been strong, as in the history of the Church, woman has played her rôle as helpmate, not merely in the physical sense of giving life, but in the psychological and spiritual sense of evoking what was best and noblest in human nature. It is a significant fact that even Christian saints walk down the sunlit road of history in pairs: St. Benedict and his sister, St. Scholastica; St. Francis and St. Clare; St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. But more significant is it that in the perfect Man of Christianity, Christ, we have a tenderness that is feminine and traits of character that are womanly. So complementary are man and woman that in perfect man we look for woman and in perfect woman we are disappointed if there is not a touch of manly strength.

But if woman was created by God as man's helpmate, it is the sad history of the Bible that she failed. Between them the first man and woman were untrue to God. When God assumed human nature it was as a man He came, and in the Manhood of Christ we have the perfect Type. But it is just the prerogative of Christianity that not only does it present us with perfect Man, but that it enriches the world with a perfect Woman. Now this was the first and primordial thing that Christ accomplished for womanhood. He made the ideal Woman possible. The woman Eve had been created by God as a perfect type. She was God's loveliest creation. A beauty was in her that was not only human but divine: her body was transfigured not only with the light of soul, but was enveloped in a radiance that streamed from Godly life within that soul. This innermost beauty Eve lost, and she woke to

the nakedness of her human beauty. Henceforth her history was sorrow and degradation. Woman had to be re-created in the divine designs. The Woman of promise, like the Man of promise, came into the dark world as from a world of light in a 'cloud of glory.' Mary was the New Woman, conceived immaculate, a creature lovely with the beauty of God Himself who filled her being. But it was the merits of Christ that made this possible. In doing that for Mary Christ helped all women, for there is something of the womanhood of Mary in every woman.

The second strong thing in Christ's relation to woman is that Christ Himself was given to humanity by a woman. The Word of God, the Second Person, took flesh in the womb of the woman, Mary. Mary became the Mother of God. From a woman alone the Word drew the flesh and blood that went to constitute His Manhood. The human history of Christ is the history of a woman and of a woman only. Proximately and immediately, as to His human nature, Jesus was the real Son of Mary. From her came to Him His life-blood and in that life-blood her temperament, the temperament of a woman. No man had part in Christ's formation. No man could share with Mary her parentage of Him. If every child resembles its human parents, then how much of the woman, Mary, was there not in the perfect Man, Christ?

This selection of a virgin for His Mother was something in itself calculated to enhance virginity for all time. Have we not an affirmation of woman's personality and her destiny which is not exhausted by motherhood as ordinarily understood? Is it not

a fact admitted even by the adversaries of Catholicism that Mary, as the ideal woman and virgin, has exercised a preponderating influence over the minds and hearts of humanity since she lived on earth? 'The world is governed by its ideals,' writes Lecky, 'and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound or, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the medieval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position, and the sanctity of weakness was recognized as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or the toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and of sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere and became the object of a reverential homage of which antiquity had no conception. Love was idealized. The moral charm and beauty of female excellence was fully felt. A new type of character was called into being, a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and of purity unknown to the proudest civilization of the past.'

It was not only virginity that Christ exalted in Mary but also the primordial fact of motherhood itself. Alice Meynell has seized upon this and given it an expression that deserves citation. 'The natural love of all ages,' she says, 'is obviously older than the Christian love of nineteen centuries for a perpetual Virgin. Therefore Mary, Her Virginity receiving all its mystery and singular glory from the fact of Her maternity, is closest to the heart of sorrowful mankind by the title of Mother.'

It is here that the work of Jesus for womankind

in general reaches every woman, for woman's deepest instinct is that of motherhood. But His work for motherhood was not completed when He selected Mary to be His Mother. There was something more ahead. Is it not significant, granting that everything Christ did had special meaning, as it must have had, that Christ's first public appearance was at a Marriage-feast in Cana and that His first miracle was worked in compliance with the wishes of His Mother, Mary? Did He not by His mere presence here suggest the sanctity of marriage? And when He later did refer to marriage was it not to bring it up to God's primitive view of it as a unity and indissoluble as long as man and woman lived? The fact is that Christ made of marriage a sacrament in His Church. By doing that He conferred upon the union of man and woman a transcendental meaning, a sacred significance, that could be realized only when this union of marriage was linked up with a more stupendous hidden thing. What was this hidden thing that was to confer new dignity on the married state? What was the something infinitely more intimate that should hold together man and woman who were 'two in one flesh'? It was nothing less than Christ's own wedding with His Spouse the Church. If marriage is holy it is as a sacrament and sign of this hidden union; man and woman are two, though in one flesh, but the intimacy of the Church, composed of men and women, with Christ as the deep reality, gives vitality and security to the married union of man and woman. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of humanity.

IV

In thus focussing your attention on Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of humanity, I have a purpose. I do believe that this vision of Christ is the only one that will embrace all the facts of woman's life. It is the view of Christ that must go with every girl through life wherever her lot is cast. The two primordial vocations of Christian women are religious vocation or motherhood in marriage. That does not mean that in certain circumstances a Christian woman's vocation may not be a life of virginity in the world. But these exceptional circumstances are exceptional and are not the rule. Many women are forced to enter that third estate; others have demands upon their lives that are best fulfilled in such a state of life. There is indeed a tendency in certain quarters to stress the idea that for a woman independent living, a profession, a career, are things in themselves superior to marriage or domesticity, but in the dawn of life it would not be a wise counsellor who would make this life of independent womanhood an ideal for girls.

No matter what views obtain in these matters, the important thing to grasp is the position of Christ as Bridegroom of humanity. Every woman, no matter what her estate, is affianced to Christ in Baptism and must prepare herself for the eternal espousals in heaven. She is a member of the Church for which He died that He might present to Himself a Spouse. Her aim in life must be to contribute in herself to the beauty and sanctity of life which will not be fully realized until the end of time when humanity will be 'encompassed with the Glory of God and a

light like a precious stone."¹ 'Let us rejoice and be glad, and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His Spouse has prepared herself.'² Whether in religion or in the world or in wedlock every woman on last analysis is affianced to Christ. In religion the life of heaven has begun in virtue of the vow of chastity, but heaven also lies at the back of marriage since Christ is the Bridegroom.

If Christ is Bridegroom then fidelity to Him must be the deepest thing in a woman's life. It is futile for her to think of giving or receiving love that has no relation to Christ. He it was who rescued woman from unequal struggle with man. By becoming the Bond of marriage He saves her from the degradation of slavery that always follows when marriage bonds are loosening. At all times love was a thing that had to have room for God in it, for as long as a woman is endowed with spirit it is only in and through God she can command from man a love that is love and not lust. Exclude God and love is necessarily hatred, for it respects not the personality of woman and reduces her to the level of a mere thing or instrument of pleasure. But when God became Man He was to woman a revelation of herself, of her deeper needs that cried out imperiously for God in the Person of the perfect Man, Jesus Christ.

For what is the soul of a woman? Is it not a thirst, a desire, for affection and love, a desire for giving even more than for receiving. Other ideals light up the path of men, but was there ever woman who did not feel that for her the whole of life was love? Is not that at once the secret of woman's

¹ Apoc. xxi, 11.

² *Ibid.*, xix, 7.

strength and weakness? The instinct of love may prove so strong that she will sacrifice all, her very personality even, if that were possible. Is not that the reason why a woman's love will quickly turn to adoration, and distinctions of right and wrong suddenly fade in presence of the one she loves? In her sense and spirit are finely wed, it is almost impossible for her to love with spirit only, the united force of flesh and spirit suggests the abandon of personality. But it is impossible so to abandon herself entirely and in that lies the eternal torment of woman and her inalienable immortal dignity. There is ever with her a sense of frustration and she carries with her a spirit single, single because One alone can fill up the capacities of a human's soul. Only God can satisfy the needs of a woman's spirit, and when God became the perfect Man He put within reach of woman, so concrete in her ideas, so attached to personality, the Ideal. Woman wants an object that she can love, even to adoration: such is Christ. Woman loves unto abandonment of self yet does not, cannot, risk the loss of personality: then let her look to Christ. Woman needs a love that will not prey upon her weakness: she will find it in Christ. Whether in religion, or in the world, or in married life, that woman will best fulfil her womanhood who has discovered Christ, the Bridegroom, for whilst in religion He is the never-failing Source of rich vitality for those who are true, in wedded life He comes between no true man and woman, since He is God's appointed Bond who alone can keep them in a love for one another that is founded on the solid rock of a mutual respect for each one's destiny and personality.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOMAN OF PROMISE

TO make good the thesis that the real emancipation of woman took place two thousand years ago and that it was Jesus Christ who made the ideal woman possible, I shall set forth here briefly the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is significant that one of the two great doctrines defined by the Church in the nineteenth century concerns woman.¹ This was the century which marked the rise of feminism in the world, a movement that obtains great momentum after 1850 and still continues to hold the attention of our contemporaries. But there are deeper issues also involved in the Church's definition and these I will mention in an opening section. In a second section I shall endeavour to elucidate the meaning of the doctrine, for while not infrequently it is obscure for Catholics themselves, its acceptance is prevented by very real ignorance on the part of non-Catholics. In a final section the traditional

¹ This point was made with great effect by Miss Alice Curtayne in a lecture entitled *The Renaissance of Woman*, delivered in the Theatre Royal, Dublin. This lecture, I am informed, will appear shortly in pamphlet form; I take the liberty of recommending it in advance to my readers: it will repay perusal.

proofs of the doctrine will be taken up and something will be said of the controversies that arose before Rome intervened with its infallible authority.

I

We who have lived to hear the Immaculate Conception proclaimed a dogma by the infallible voice of Rome scarcely realize our blessedness. The music of the Church's voice fills the Catholic soul and mind with peace. Never before had the Catholic wish to honour Mary such right to father thought. There is a certain pathos in the memory of those whose love for the Blessed Virgin knew no bounds, and yet, did not, like us, enjoy the divine conviction that quickly springs to meet the pronouncement of God and of His Church that Mary was conceived without sin.

December 8th, 1854, must for ever stand out in the memory of humanity. It was on that day that the Catholic world reverently listened to the Church's proclamation for the first time of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Five years previously word had gone out from Pope Pius IX asking bishops and clergy and people to express what they thought of the Immaculate Conception. Of the six hundred and twenty archbishops and bishops who sent in their answers only four were not definitely in favour of its definition; and of those four, three in a short time changed their opinions. On December 8th, 1854, Pope Pius IX solemnly declared the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma of faith: 'By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and

by Our own authority, We declare, pronounce, and define, that the doctrine which holds that the most blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her Conception, was, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, preserved free from all stain of original sin is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore most firmly and constantly to be believed by all the Faithful. Wherefore, if any, which God avert, shall presume to think in their hearts differently from what has been defined by Us, let them know and be sure that they are condemned by their own judgement, that they have made shipwreck of the Faith, and have fallen from the unity of the Church; and, moreover, that they are liable *ipso facto* to all the lawful penalties, if they shall dare to express what they thus feel in their hearts, either by word, writing, or any external sign.¹

The external spectacle that met the eyes of Rome on that day of solemn promulgation—the Basilica of St. Peter's was thronged with people, and representatives of the whole Christian world listened—is a fitting symbol of the Church's Unity, and whoso reads these words of proclamation carefully cannot but experience the sense of power that is conveyed in every one of them. In an epoch where all authority is dissolving it is wholesome to find a Power on earth capable of binding man, heart and mind, and of demanding from him allegiance to the truths of God.

In virtue, then, of this definition by the Church the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception becomes

¹ Bull 'Ineffabilis Deus.'

a dogma of the Faith. Naturally the question will occur: is the Immaculate Conception then a *new* dogma? Did not revelation close with the last of the Apostles, and how can we conceive of anything being super-added to the deposit of revelation made by God through Jesus Christ and His Apostles?

The question is a natural one. But it is easily answered once we bear in mind the wording of the Definition itself.

The Church has said simply that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is a doctrine revealed by God. In other words it has declared that this doctrine has belonged from the very beginning to the deposit of revelation. What is really new is the dogmatic definition on the Church's part. The doctrine itself is not new. It is co-ancient with the Church.

It is not difficult to surmise a deep significance in the Church's choice of the Immaculate Conception for dogmatic definition in the nineteenth century. A simple consideration will suffice to reveal it. The Church is ever in conflict with her enemies. In that never-ceasing conflict She adapts herself to their changing tactics; She is conscious of the particular needs of every epoch. Now a single word crystallises the Church's greatest enemy at the present day. That word is Naturalism.

Naturalism, which has spread through Europe since the sixteenth century, is a doctrine, or an attitude of mind, which consistently ignores the supernatural in all departments. In philosophy, in literature, in politics, there is an all-round attempt on the part of the modern mind to ignore certain things divinely revealed about human nature. The

tendency is to live simply a natural life and to forget the fact that God decreed a supernatural destiny for the human race.

What, it will be asked, has the Immaculate Conception to say to all this? The answer is not far to seek. By defining the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception the Church asserts again the supernatural character of all true religion in the present order. For one thing She affirms the miraculous intervention of God in the course of events. But by making the Immaculate Conception something in the form of a very special and exceptional privilege for the Blessed Virgin, the Church reiterates her whole doctrine of original sin. The exception, we say, confirms the rule. By excepting the Blessed Virgin, the Church affirms the general rule that every child of Adam is conceived in sin: the stain of original sin is upon his soul.

In no better or more forcible way could the Church bring to the minds of everybody the fact that man was created for a supernatural destiny, that at one period he possessed sanctifying grace and original justice, and that by sin man has fallen from that pristine state though retaining, through the mercy of God, his original supernatural destiny. It is true that this elevation of man by God to a supernatural destiny is a wondrous act of condescension on the part of God. But God will not allow His offer to be rejected. This act of condescension on the part of God implies a very serious obligation on the part of man. Man must accept what God offers. Man is no longer a creature with merely natural destinies. In the present order there is only one destiny for all. And that is a supernatural

one, the vision of God. The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was, in the intentions of God, bound up with the coming of a Saviour who would render possible the fulfilment of God's original intention in creating man.

By defining the Immaculate Conception the Church throws down the gauntlet to Naturalism of every kind. She runs directly counter to that modern tendency to ignore the fall of man, to have nothing to do with the supernatural, and to live a purely natural life irrespective of God's designs. That was very much before the mind of the saintly Pontiff, Pius X, when he wrote his Encyclical, *Ad diem illum illustrissimum*, fifty years after the Definition of Pius IX. His words are very apposite here and carry with them an authority that cannot be gainsaid. 'And, indeed,' he says, 'how do the enemies of our faith begin their work of spreading those doubts which have already shaken the faith of many? They begin by denying that man has fallen through original sin from his estate. They describe this original sin together with its consequences, the corruption of the very beginning of the human race, the fall of man and hence the punishment, and the need of a Redeemer as a myth. When they have done away with all this, they can soon go on to prove that there is no need of Christ, nor of His Church, nor of grace, nor of any supernatural order; in short they overthrow the whole system of the Catholic Faith.' By defining the Immaculate Conception, therefore, the Church erects a bulwark against the invasion of Naturalism. To tamper with the true doctrine of man and of his supernatural destiny is to open the way, as Pius X

says, towards complete rejection of the whole Christian and Catholic system.

Not only was the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception by the Church a challenge to the modern non-religious world ; it is also a challenge to those who are separated from the true Church of Christ. The doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and original sin are very closely bound up with one another. When the followers of Luther and Calvin gave to the world their false ideas of the fall of man and original sin, it was only natural to expect that they should err in regard to the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Cardinal Newman in his day informed Dr. Pusey of that learned man's ignorance respecting Catholic doctrine on the point, and to-day it will be found that the rejection of this glorious privilege of the Blessed Virgin by Protestants very frequently has its origin in false conceptions, not to say ignorance, of what we Catholics hold. A few words, therefore, are called for on the Catholic view of original sin.

II

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception can be understood, in fact, only in relation to that original state in which our first parents were created, and from which they fell through original sin. They could have been created by God in a purely natural state, endowed with natural faculties of intellect and will, and destined for a natural happiness which, whatever else it might be, could not be the immediate vision of God face to face. Things, however, did not happen thus. When God created

man He intended him for a final destiny which 'surpasseth all understanding,' a destiny which implies a vision of God Himself: 'It hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.'¹ As a preparation for that destiny, and as an instalment of it in advance, God bestowed upon the first man and woman a principle of supernatural life over and above their natural life.

This new life was a participation in the life of God Himself. It elevated the natural soul to a state of dignity whereby man became like to God, the adopted son of God, and heir to the Kingdom of Heaven. Redemption was looked upon by St. Paul, for instance, as a reconciliation with God. Sanctifying grace which we receive through the merits of Christ marks a return to a primal state.² And in his epistle to the Romans he very clearly says that Christ is the New Adam, thereby linking up the supernatural life we now enjoy with that possessed by man before he sinned.³

Adam and Eve, therefore, were endowed with the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. In addition to that they possessed other gifts. These gifts had a wonderfully ennobling influence also. They had the effect of putting their whole being, body and soul, in harmony with reason and with God. The sensitive faculties were completely subject to mind, and body was wholly subject to spirit. Immortality of soul and body was also theirs, and they were exempt from pain and death.

¹ 1 John, iii, 2. ² Col., iii, 9-10; Eph. iv, 24; v, 17.

³ Rom., v, 10-19.

Theologians are not agreed as to the precise differences that must be recognized between sanctifying grace and those other gifts that went to complete the original justice of our first parents. But the important thing, if I may so speak, in this original state was the divine life of sanctifying grace. On that point all are agreed. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God by sin, the important thing they lost was precisely this supernatural life of grace. The other gifts went as a matter of course, and their immediate loss may have been more evident and conspicuous. Reason was no longer as subservient as it had been to God ; the body was no longer entirely subject to the spirit as the presence of concupiscence intimated ; and pain and suffering became man's lot. But the real calamity was the privation of sanctifying grace which had made man the friend of God, and heir to the Kingdom of heaven.

Now, this gift of divine life was bestowed by God on Adam not merely as a personal favour, but as a gift to mankind in general. In Adam He saw the head of the entire human race. Adam was held responsible not only as a private individual, but as the representative of all. For God intended to put man to trial. He forbade Adam, accordingly, to eat of the forbidden fruit. He told him clearly what the result would be of violating His command. 'In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.' Corporeal death would mean the loss of immortality, but this death is merely a symbol and a figure of the greater death of the soul to God by the privation of sanctifying grace.

Because God had intended to endow all men in

Adam with supernatural life, it followed that by Adam's sin mankind lost the right to that life. This was so, because God regarded Adam not only as a private individual, but as the constituted head of the human race. That is the force of St. Paul's dictum that 'by one man sin entered into this world.'¹ The act of generation is the means whereby original sin is transmitted. It would follow therefore that every son of man would be conceived in sin; the stain of original sin would be upon the soul of Adam's children. In Adam we would have all sinned. His loss is ours. We are conceived and born devoid of that life intended by God for us, and therefore we are displeasing to Him and bear the marks of Satan's triumph over our first parents.

Such is the general law. But there is one exception. The Blessed Virgin is that exception. She is, in the oft-quoted words of a Protestant poet,

'Our tainted nature's solitary boast.'

At no time was she displeasing to God. At no moment of her being did she bear the marks of Satan's victory over mankind. Hers, we say, was an Immaculate Conception.

It will be important to be clear about the meaning of conception. It is necessary, when speaking of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, to exclude what it does not mean. It is a strange thing, yet not at all inconceivable, that certain people may confuse the Immaculate Conception with certain facts that are implied by the Annunciation. It may be imagined that the conception of the Virgin Mary

¹ Rom., v, 12.

which we call Immaculate refers to her conception of the Man-God, her Son, Jesus. Now, such a view would, of course, be entirely erroneous. We must not confuse two such entirely different things as the conception of Jesus by His Mother, Mary, and the conception of Mary herself by her Mother, St. Anne. The Immaculate Conception refers, not to the conception of Jesus, but to the conception of the Blessed Virgin in the womb of her own mother. The virgin-birth of our divine Lord stands out as one unique fact in history. To Jesus alone it belongs; no one shares it with Him. In this respect, His Virgin Mother shares the fate of all humanity. She, like other children of merely human parents, was born in the normal way. Her parents were Joachim and Anne. That is the first confusion to be avoided.

A second possible confusion may arise for those who have heard of the privileged birth of certain saints. If, for example, we say that St. John the Baptist was born free from the taint of original sin, that was so because already in his mother's womb he was cleansed and sanctified by God. But this pre-natal sanctification does not exclude the fact that St. John was conceived in original sin. To be *born* without sin, and to be *conceived* without sin are two very different things. The claim we make for the Blessed Virgin is that not only was she born without original sin, but that she was actually conceived without it. There was never a single moment when the black cloud of sin was over her. Never for a moment was she under the empire of Satan. At the very moment that her being was constituted she was Immaculate.

It will be necessary, however, to add just one other distinction in order to clarify the notion of conception itself. We must distinguish between conception in its active sense which corresponds to the conjugal act of the parents, and in its passive sense which has to do with the infusion of the soul by God.

The terms 'active conception' and 'passive conception' are recurring so frequently in the literature of the Immaculate Conception that it is impossible to have a clear idea of what the doctrine means without grasping the difference that these terms cover. Original sin being an hereditary thing, passing from parents to child, it was natural to look on conception as the means of transmitting the sin of Adam. 'Active conception' refers to the parents' act. It was thought for a long time that there were different stages in the development of the human embryo from the moment of conception implying a succession of sensitive, animal and rational souls. However that may be, it is certain that for the constitution of a human being the special co-operation of God is needed. The rational soul must come from Him. Now, the infusion of this soul into the human embryo by God corresponds to what is called 'passive conception.'

To which conception does the Immaculate Conception refer? Obviously to the 'passive conception.' Whatever may have characterized the conjugal act of the Blessed Virgin's parents, the important thing to bear in mind is that her 'passive conception,' or the informing of the embryo with rational life, was Immaculate. From the very first moment of her being, that moment which

coincided with the infusion of her soul, the Blessed Virgin was in sanctifying grace. Her soul as it came from God was adorned with grace, and her conception was unsullied by any taint, without blemish and immaculate.

By a singular grace and privilege, says the Church's Definition, and in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin was preserved free from stain of sin. It will be remarked that the Church says explicitly that it was in virtue of the merits of her Son, Jesus Christ, that the Blessed Virgin was conceived Immaculate. And it is true. Mary was redeemed by her Son, the Saviour of the entire human race. But the mode of her redemption was evidently something very special. There is no question here as to whether the Blessed Virgin ought to have contracted original sin. What the dogma of the Immaculate Conception asserts is that in fact the Blessed Virgin did not contract sin, and that in addition this very singular privilege was due to the merits of Jesus Christ. The Blessed Virgin was not allowed first to contract original sin and then be redeemed. No, the Definition very clearly states that in the very first instant of her conception Mary was immaculate. It follows that the redemption of the Blessed Virgin took place by way of being preserved from incurring what in the ordinary course of events she would have undoubtedly incurred, the stain of original sin. By the Immaculate Conception, then, the Blessed Virgin is in no way rendered radically independent of her Son, Jesus. Like all others she stood in need of the redeeming Blood of the Saviour of mankind. But, unlike all others, she

never actually contracted original sin. That was the singularity of her privilege.

In a word, we mean by the Immaculate Conception that Mary, from the very first instant of her being, belonged to God. Never was she under the curse of Satan. She was redeemed, it is true, by the power of Christ, but her redemption was one of preservation. Never in actual fact was she in sin. She was always a child of God, destined in the eternal designs to be the Mother of God, and she was fashioned by God in a way that God alone could have effected in order to fulfil her destiny as the Mother of the Redeemer of all men.

III

We may now pass on to review the traditional arguments for the doctrine. It must be remarked that the truth of the Immaculate Conception required a revelation from God. With Him rested the choice of such a wondrous privilege. He alone could have made known His intentions. The Immaculate Conception is not an example of a truth that could be obtained simply by reasoning on other revealed truths, were it not itself revealed. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was not merely virtually revealed; that is what we mean when we say that something may be inferred from Scripture by employing an additional argument not found in revelation. No, the Immaculate Conception was formally revealed, but only in an implicit manner. As such it was part of God's revelation to man, and, as we have insisted, the fact of its Definition in the nineteenth century did not

constitute an original finding on the part of the Church, or an addition to the deposit of revelation which closed with Christ and His Apostles.

It is not difficult to see a reference to the Immaculate Conception at the very outset of the Bible. The moment Adam and Eve fell, just as darkness and clouds of sorrow were beginning to cover the earth, a tiny star of hope rose up in the firmament of man's aspirations. 'And the Lord said to the serpent . . . I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.'¹ The sense of this promise is obvious. The Lord refers to a future redemption of the human race from the servitude of Satan.

The redemption spoken of would be such that it would imply complete and radical victory over Satan. The enmity between Satan and the woman is absolute. But it is difficult to see how this could be were Mary at any moment of her existence under the dominion of Satan, as she would have been were she conceived in sin.

The woman I referred to, I have supposed, is the Blessed Virgin. What is the foundation for this supposition? Well, in the first place, it could not have been Eve. Eve had just been vanquished by

¹ 'She shall crush.' This is the ordinary translation of Vulgate reading, 'Ipsa conteret.' In the Hebrew, however, the word corresponding to 'Ipsa' is really masculine and refers to 'semen,' and so should read 'Ipsum conteret.' This reading would not affect the argument which takes its force from the enmities between the Woman and the serpent. The argument, if anything, would be stronger reading 'Ipsum conteret' since it is the Son (semen) who ultimately crushes the serpent's head.

Satan. Nor could there be question merely of woman in general, for the very same reason: in Eve all women fell. There can be question, therefore, only of one particular woman. 'Take the comparision of Scripture with Scripture,' wrote Cardinal Newman, 'and see how the whole hangs together as we Catholics interpret it. A war between the woman and the Serpent is spoken of in Genesis. *Who* is the Serpent? Scripture nowhere says, till the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. There at last, for the first time, the 'Serpent' is interpreted to mean the Evil Spirit. Now, *how* is he introduced? Why, by the vision *again* of a Woman, his enemy—and just as in the first vision in Genesis, the Woman has a 'seed,' so here a 'Child.' Can we help saying, then, that the woman is Mary, in the third of Genesis? And if so, and our reading is right, the first prophecy ever given connects the Second Woman with the First—Mary with Eve.'

The antithesis, in fact, between Mary and Eve is one of the most constant things in tradition. We see how neatly Newman linked up the two on the basis of the promise given in Genesis. But in this, as Newman insisted, he was simply making use of tradition. The contrast between the two Eves is found in St. Justin, St. Irenæus and in Tertullian. 'That was restored,' says Tertullian, 'through Mary which, through Eve, had perished.' And St. Irenæus tells us that 'the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied through Mary's obedience.'

The same antithesis may be also seen in the biblical account of Eve's name as Eve. It occurs in the same chapter of Genesis. St. Epiphanius refers to it. We read therein that Adam called his wife Eve

‘because she was mother of all living.’¹ On reflection we see the pathos of the situation. Why, the prophecy of death was ringing in their ears as Adam called his wife Eve. Eve herself was bereft of divine life ; she was dead, and mother of death in the eyes of God. Only the hope of a New Eve could have given meaning to such an appellation.

The Woman, therefore, referred to by God must have been the Second Eve, Mary. The opposition that He placed between her and Satan was absolute. And that was possible only on the hypothesis of the Immaculate Conception, whereby Mary was conceived free from sin and subjection to Satan.

Another line of argument for the Immaculate Conception takes its rise in the salutation employed by the Angel Gabriel when he came to announce the coming of the Redeemer. ‘But when the fathers and the ecclesiastical writers themselves pondered, in the depth of their souls and mind, the words which the Angel Gabriel addressed to the Blessed Virgin, on the occasion when he announced to her the most sublime dignity of Mother of God, and that she was, in God’s own name and by His order, declared to be ‘full of grace’: they have taught, that by this singular and solemn salutation, never heard of in regard to any other, is plainly shown that the Mother of God has been the abode of all divine graces, has been completely adorned with all the marks of affection and love of the Divine Spirit—nay, that she is a treasure almost infinite, replete with those favours ; an abyss that cannot be fathomed ; so far holy that she was never under a curse ; and that she alone, together with her Son,

¹ Gen. iii, 20.

was sharer of continual benediction, and that she merited to hear from the lips of St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, the words : ' Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.'¹

The force of the argument comes from the phrase that Mary was ' full of grace.' To Mary alone was such a salutation made. If elsewhere certain individuals were declared ' full of grace,' or ' filled with the Holy Ghost,' it can always be seen from the immediate context that the phrase is employed with a restricted meaning. In Mary's case there is no such limitation. But if literally she is ' full of grace,' it is implied that her whole life from the first to the last instant was ' full of grace.'

After Scripture, the second source of revelation is Tradition. Testimonies could be multiplied to illustrate that the constant teaching of the fathers held to the Immaculate Conception. We can do nothing more here than mention a few of the better-known fathers. In the fourth century St. Ephrem and St. Ambrose may be cited. The reader will find a complete chapter, entitled *The Voice of the Fathers*, in Bishop Ullathorne's book on the *Immaculate Conception*. In the fifth century we may select St. Augustine. He was refuting Pelagius who held that quite a number of persons had lived without sin on earth. St. Augustine argued that all just men had known sin except the Blessed Virgin, *of whom for the honour of the Lord, I will have no question where sin is concerned*. A possible objection to this would be that St. Augustine was merely referring to actual, not original, sin. It is clear,

¹ Bull of Definition, ' Ineffabilis Deus.'

however, that he also had original sin in mind from the Saint's controversy with Julian, who was a disciple of Pelagius. Julian denied the doctrine of original sin. Against Augustine he appealed to the pious belief of the people and insinuated that Augustine, by his doctrine of original sin, had also included the Blessed Virgin. Augustine met the charge. He denied that he had ever transferred Mary to the devil, therein clearly showing with what horror he shrank from the idea of associating Mary with Satan.

Typical of the constant tradition of the Church was the early establishment of a liturgical feast to celebrate the Conception of the Blessed Virgin. In this the Greek Church was ahead of the Latin. The first indubitable testimony is to be found in the canon drawn up by St. Andrew, Archbishop of Crete, about the year A.D. 675. Some are of the opinion that the feast goes back to the fifth century. It is certain, however, that it was celebrated in the seventh century under the significant title, 'The Conception of St. Anne, the mother of the Mother of God.' After St. Andrew, John of Eubœa (740) places the feast of the Conception of Mary among the ten great feasts that should be kept holy.

It is not quite so clear when the feast began to be celebrated in the Latin Church. Some have thought that Naples was the first place in the ninth century, but evidence has also been brought to light that would go to show that Ireland was one of the very first parts of Western Christendom to honour Mary's Conception. Fr. Thurston, S.J., has found mention of the feast in a liturgical MS. of the tenth century.

It was precisely out of the growth of this growing celebration of the feast of the Blessed Virgin's Conception that controversies arose concerning the doctrine itself. It happened in this way. The festival had begun to be celebrated at Lyons, but without permission from Rome. St. Bernard protested. His plea against the introduction of the feast was apparently because of the lack of requisite authority. In his denunciation of the custom, however, it may well be that St. Bernard questioned the mystery itself. At least, his utterances were such as to give rise to controversy. His difficulty was this : ' If therefore she could not be sanctified before her conception, since she was not in existence ; nor in the conception itself on account of the sin which was in it, it follows that she was sanctified in the womb after conception, which, by her being cleansed from sin, made her nativity holy, not her conception.'¹

It is clear that what St. Bernard is here referring to is conception taken in its ' active sense.' He seems to have overlooked the point of view that results from bearing in mind the ' passive conception ' of the Blessed Virgin. He did not allow for that alternative aspect, and his inference was therefore a hasty one. Considering conception from the active side of the parents, St. Bernard seems to have missed the most important moment of the soul's infusion by God, and that is sufficient to take the force out of his conclusion.

That, however, was not the only difficulty. There was another. St. Bernard seems to have

¹ This is taken from Ep. 174 to the Cathedral Chapter of Lyons. Cf. Ullathorne, *The Immaculate Conception*, p. 135.

experienced it, as is clear from the quotations just given. It seems a rather subtle one. How could a soul be saved before it existed? To be saved it seems evident that a person must first exist, and then the danger of contamination, arising out of generation, seemed unavoidable. In reality, both difficulties had a common root in the confusion of the two senses of conception. Had the meaning of 'passive conception' been grasped, the thought was bound to arise that God could have sanctified the soul of Mary in the very moment of its infusion into the body. But this distinction between 'active' and 'passive' conception was to become clear in time.

One final difficulty remained. It is the most important of the three I mention. It impressed itself on the minds of the very greatest theologians of the thirteenth century. It was this: If the Blessed Virgin had not sinned, how could she be said to have been redeemed? And yet all must believe that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the entire human race.

These were the three chief difficulties that gave rise to controversies concerning the Immaculate Conception. These were the difficulties that seem to have held back such great thinkers as Alexander of Hales, St. Bonaventure and even St. Thomas Aquinas. I am not unaware that much has been written to show that Aquinas did hold the Immaculate Conception, but the fact remains that these difficulties, and in particular the last mentioned one, are put very forcibly in his writings.¹ Both St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, to venture an

¹ Cf. *Summa* Ia-IIre, Q. 81, art. 3; III, Q. 27, art. 2.

opinion, saw no answer to the difficulty of the Blessed Virgin's redemption in the event of her not having contracted original sin. Certainly St. Bonaventure did not solve it. He says explicitly that to be saved one has first to be, and then he admitted that the soul contracted sin by contact with the flesh. The soul for him was united to the body before the grace of God was infused into it. Had the Blessed Virgin been exempt, so it seemed to St. Bonaventure, the position of Christ as universal Redeemer would be compromised.¹

Further, St. Bonaventure gave his opinion as the common opinion of his day. Now, here a difficulty arises. If the great doctors have thus spoken against the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, while the Church looked on, is it not peculiar to make the claim that this doctrine is part of revelation? How can it be allowed that such Doctors of the Church should have erred on such a fundamental point? In reply to this it is necessary to make a distinction. Had there been question of some doctrine formally and explicitly, and in so many terms, revealed, then it would have been impossible that such men should have been allowed to question the doctrine. But if there is a question of a doctrine which is formally revealed yet merely implicitly, then we must inquire as to what terms these men employed when speaking of such a doctrine, and how precisely they looked upon it from the point of view of faith. It would be impossible that for any length of time eminent theologians should have spoken against a revealed truth, if they did so

¹ Cf. *Opera Omnia*, Vol. III (Quarrachi), dist. 3, a. 1., q. 2.

absolutely and put forward their own opinions as the true doctrines: in such a case the Church would certainly have intervened. When, however, there is question of an opinion put forward with restrictions and with no claims for it as revealed doctrine, then it is a different matter. At no time was there unanimity amongst theologians in the denial of the Immaculate Conception. Even when there was most doubt, their opinions are couched in such terms as to allow for the intervention of the Church's authority. St. Bernard said explicitly that the truth of this doctrine must be decided by the Church, and he himself was ready to emend his own judgement should it prove necessary. St. Thomas has spoken in such a way that a very good case could be made to show that he held the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. St. Bonaventure put forward his opinion as simply more consonant, to his mind, with the honour of Christ. But at no time did the Church canonize such opinions. On the contrary, her sympathies, if we may infer them from her allowing the liturgical celebration of the feast to go on, were with those who believed in the Immaculate Conception of our Lady. In a word, dissenting theologians did not put forward their views as revealed doctrine, the Church gave no formal approval to their theories, and there was never any question of claiming for the denial of the Immaculate Conception the authority of revealed truths.

We have now noticed two important stages in the development of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The controversy was opened by St. Bernard's letter to the Cathedral Chapter of

Lyons in 1140. It continued during the period of the great Scholastics from Alexander of Hales to St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, who both taught about 1270. A third stage was reached about the year 1305 when a Franciscan theologian, Ven. John Duns Scotus, rose up and defended adequately the royal prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin. I am going to claim for Scotus the high honour of having first answered the three chief difficulties that had hitherto obscured the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Few will deny him that great honour. Legend has pictured the Statue of our Lady inclining towards him when, in 1307, he was to encounter all opponents at the Sorbonne University in Paris. But there is an authentic ring about the following words taken from a letter of Cardinal Merry del Val, Secretary of State, to Father Peter Pauwels, O.F.M., on July 4th, 1904, and I prefer to rely on them.

‘To write the history of these events which finally induced Pius IX of immortal memory to proclaim, in due time, this dogma so dear to our hearts, is to place in prominent relief a glory and an honour of the Franciscan Order. Your Order, from its cradle, has, according to the directions of St. Francis himself, been nourished with a devotion to the Immaculate Virgin ; later on treading in the footprints of Venerable John Duns Scotus, it propagated this truth with so much zeal and enthusiasm, that it carried this doctrine of Mary’s non-forfeiture of grace as on the crest of a wave to its ultimate triumph, gaining thereby a special title to her protection.’¹

Scotus it was who gave final and sufficient

¹ See *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 1904, p. 481.

answers to the difficulties that obscured men's view of the truth. Had Scotus done naught else, then he were worthy of our admiration. To accomplish that were an entirely sufficient reason for any man's existence. Scotus simply took up the objections that had been urged before his time, and showed that they were inconclusive. These objections, as we have said, are reducible to three headings. To the difficulty that the act of generation would, through concupiscence, entail transmission of original sin, Scotus replied by emphasizing the passive aspect of conception and by showing that in the case of the Blessed Virgin the soul was infused by God already adorned with sanctifying grace.

The second chief difficulty arose out of the consideration that the Blessed Virgin had first to be in order to be saved. It would follow that, being a natural daughter of Adam, she should share his loss. Scotus replied to that by an important distinction. He said there was a difference between priority in the abstract order of thought and priority in the order of time and in fact. Taking things in the abstract order of thought we must admit, as Scotus pointed out, that every descendant of Adam has a sufficient cause for contracting original sin as long as the natural course of events was left to itself. That, however, could not prevail against the power of God, who, in the order of time and of fact, could intervene and prevent contraction of original sin. God could have accomplished that by endowing the soul of Mary with sanctifying grace at the very moment of her conception ; grace and sin cannot go together. Thus, in the abstract

there is a certain priority which would imply that the Blessed Virgin had first to exist with a natural origin in Adam, yet as things actually happened the infusion of her soul by God and her redemption took place at one and the same time : the priority that exists for thought was prevented in actual fact by the omnipotence of God.

But then the final difficulty arises. If, as Scotus insisted, Mary did not contract the stain of original sin, how can we say that she was saved ? Only a person who has been in sin can be said to have been saved. Without sin how can we speak of redemption ? To this Scotus made the brilliant reply : the redemption of Mary was a special one, a redemption in the form of a preservation. The Blessed Virgin was redeemed. He insists on that. Nay more, she had more need of redemption than anybody else, because of her high destiny in the intentions of God. She was really saved through the merits of her Son. Hers was the most perfect redemption. For, as he argued, it is a more excellent thing to preserve one from evil than to rescue from an evil that has been allowed to reach one. The Blessed Virgin was preserved from evil. God did not allow her first to contract original sin and then purify her. He forestalled the evil of sin, and, having in view the merits of the Redeemer, He accomplished, by a wondrous miracle of preservation, the mystery of her Immaculate Conception.

Scotus, it is commonly said, summed up his defence of the Immaculate Conception thus : 'It was possible for God : It was befitting God : Therefore it has been.' The formula is terse and

neat. It contains the greatest contribution of Scotus to the history of Catholic Thought, and posterity will be grateful to him for it. He prepared the way for the final triumph. When the Council of Trent discussed the question of original sin in 1546, it excepted the Blessed Virgin from the general law. Only one more step was needed for full and universal recognition of Mary's glorious privilege. That step was taken when Pius IX of immortal memory defined as a dogma of faith the Immaculate Conception.

CHAPTER V

THE VICTORY OF CHRIST

I

IT has been sometimes objected against Catholics that the Personality of Jesus Christ has been obscured for them by the shadow of their Church. It has been insinuated that the Church comes between God and man, and instead of helping the religious attitude of humanity it merely cramps and hampers the development of religious experience. What precisely is meant by this complaint is not always very clear, and when a man like Jean Jacques Rousseau complains of all the things and people that come between him and God we are strangely unconvinced. Does a man like Jean Jacques expect the Almighty to furnish him privately with a revelation of His designs? Or is it the province of man to dictate to God the manner of His revelation? Are we not in the sight of God what we are in reality, a race, a society, one great human family? If God takes account of this solidarity of the human race, are we to complain?

I have not here to go into the detail of Christ's establishment of a Church. That He did found a visible society, with Peter at its head, is something that may be read by the unprejudiced in the Gospels. But if Christ did so found a Church, and vested in it

His own power, it is clearly indicated that such a Church was not intended as an obstacle, but really as a form of mediation whereby humanity would make contact with Christ Himself. The Church no more comes between us and Christ than does Christ Himself come between us and God. Like Christ, the Church is a bridge whereby we may pass to God.

One thing is certain. The reproach levelled against Catholics, that for them Christ is obscured by the Church, is without foundation. The Catholic Church has always grasped the fact that what matters most in Christianity is the Person of Jesus Christ Himself; everything else of vital value follows from what He is. As a doctrine Christianity is without peer, as a moral code it stands alone, but the greatest thing in Christianity is Christ. It is personality that counts and the Personality of Christ is that of God.

I have already insisted that on last analysis the problem of life is identical with the problem of religion. The moment we think deeply on any subject, in fact, we are driven to God whether we will it or not. But Christ is God's 'appointed heir of all things.'¹ 'For in Him were all things created in heaven and upon the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and in Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist.'² Without reference to Jesus Christ, then, there is no adequate solution in the present order for any problem in the world. But I have selected the problem of life, for there the reasoning is the

¹ Heb. i, 2.

² Col. i, 16-18.

most convincing. Human life imperatively demands religion ; man is an enigma the key to which is God. But Christ is God. In Him dwells corporeally the fullness of the Godhead. Further, Christ has this advantage in relation to human life, that He is God accessible, as it were, to man. Outside of Christ and apart from Christ God eludes our grasp ; He seems remote from life's concerns. Christ is God expressed in human terms. He is God engaged in the eternal drama of human life. It is this proximity that ensures Christ's lasting power. In a lyrical outburst of devotion St. Bernard gave testimony to this in words that shall never die : ' The name of Jesus is both light and nourishment. Are you not strengthened in the spirit when you meditate upon it ? What else enriches the mind so much as this name of Jesus ? What so restores our wasted powers, strengthens the soul in virtue, inspires it to good and honourable conduct, fosters in it all pure and saintly characteristics ? . . . No book or writing has any savour for me if I read not there the name of Jesus ; no colloquy or sermon grips unless the name of Jesus be heard there. As honey to the taste, as melody in the ear, as songs of gladness in the heart, so is the name of Jesus. . . . ' When Christ comes to mean for us not only a Name at which we bow our heads, or an historical Personage of two thousand years ago, but a living Personality, a King, a Leader inspiring chivalry and courage, a Bridegroom evoking love, fidelity and tenderness, the Son of Man who makes humanity His living garment, a Guest who inundates the soul with light and strength, then will our Christianity be assured.

Christ will begin to exercise the spell of His Personality over us, He will fill our eyes with vision, He will teach us the secret of noble living, and we shall be tokens of Him to a world that is in direst need of Him.

Upon this influence of Christ will depend the victory of Christ; the victory of Christ here and now is that of Christians over the enemies of Christ's kingdom. The honour of Christ is in the keeping of Christians, and upon them lies the responsibility of fulfilling that prophecy of His: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Me.'

There is a way of looking at this victory which enhances Christ's proximity and singularly ennobles the Christian's vision of his responsibilities. What was the driving force in Christ's own life? Was it not the glory of the Father? In all His thoughts, desires and actions Christ had but one ideal, the interests of the Father, the founding of God's kingdom. From the first moment of His life until the last this was the reason of His life and action. His very food was to do the will of the Father. By laying down His life He restored the broken order and in Him humanity and the universe made reparation to God's offended Majesty.

But in heaven Christ is still the same, thirsting for the glory of the Godhead. His life of thirty-three years was not enough to satisfy that thirst. He would willingly come to earth, live again, if that would further the interests of His Father. Does not He even do so? Granted that His union with Christians is no longer the Hypostatic union that took place in the Incarnation, yet it is no mere moral union either. Christ truly lives in Christians by

Baptism and sanctifying grace: 'You are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'¹ 'You have been clothed,' says St. Paul, 'with Christ Jesus.'² 'We have been grafted in Christ.'³ In a word, Christ liveth in Christians. But if He does so, what is Christ's idea in this economy? It is to further the kingdom of God on earth. How does He do so? By taking unto Himself a new body, a mystic body, in which to work out the glory of His Father: 'For as the body is one, and hath many members: and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one, so also is Christ. . . . You are the body of Christ and members of member.'⁴ Thus we see Christ taking unto Himself a body composed of a myriad human lives of different races, of different occupations, of different sexes, in order to live again in them and so fill the earth with the glory of His life. The complete Christ now is Christ the Head united to His members and the victory of Christ is the victory of the total Christ, the joint triumph of Christ and Christians.

Something similar to this is suggested by the powerful text of St. Paul wherein he says that 'we fill up what was wanting to the sufferings of Christ.' In the personal life of Christ there was nothing wanting; His cup was full. But in the new broader life of Christ, as it takes hold of Christians, there will be always something wanting until Christ shall have grown to His full stature in humanity. Christ must live in every man, God's kingdom must take root in human nature, until the earth is filled

¹ Col. iii, 3.

³ Rom. vi, 5.

² Gal. iii, 27.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii, 12-27.

with the New Humanity that is united to Christ. Somewhat as the disembodied spirit will not achieve its final greatness until it is reunited to its body, so the glory of Christ will not be fully realized until it shines through the body of the elect congregated around Him in heaven. Then will Christ's victory be complete.

What a new enthusiasm would not come into our lives if we could but sense the request of Christ to allow Him to live again in us. See what it would mean. Our triple life of knowledge, love and action should proceed both from Christ and from us ; we should be His instruments ; everything we do should be attributable to Him and to us. In a word, the ideal of our lives should be ' Now I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.' We are Christ : our victory in life will be the victory of Christ Himself.

II

Before that can happen Christ must have become a reality, a tremendous reality, for us ; He must have spoken to us in the intimacy of our hearts. For one is our Master, Christ. ' When no one speaks to you outwardly,' says St. Augustine, ' He speaks to you inwardly. Yet, if anyone is teaching you outwardly, let Christ be in your heart ; let His unction be in your heart, lest, having no inward fountain to refresh you, your heart should thirst in loneliness. The interior Master teaches, Christ teaches, His inspiration teaches. Where His inspiration, where His teaching is not, in vain does the outward teacher fill your ears with sounding words.' If we are truly to come to the knowledge of Christ

and hear His inward voice, we must listen, we must listen with our whole personality.

In knowing Christ lies the only hope of our salvation. To the Jews who had rejected Him St. Peter said: 'Neither is there salvation in any other name; for there is no other name under heaven given to man whereby he must be saved.'¹ Christ was God's Gift to humanity 'in order that those who believe in Him may not perish, but that they may have eternal life.'² All history emerging from the ruins of Paradise ran up into Him, for 'Christ is the end of the law for the salvation of all those who believe in Him.'³ And in His last hours He epitomized His teaching on true life in trenchant words: 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.'⁴

But there is knowledge and knowledge. Many people know *of* Christ, many have heard of Him, but few really know Him, few have heard Him. Many Christians have faith in Christ, believe in Him, but there is something remote in their belief and faith. The value men set upon a thing depends upon their need of it, and it is only when men have begun to sense the depths of life awakened by life's perplexities and sufferings that they come face to face with Christ. Those who look upon the Christian message as a super-added thing to life, an additional luxury or restraint, are never likely to sense Christ's reality. It is only when Christ is looked upon as the one authentic Exponent of life's purpose and meaning, when we have begun

¹ Acts iv, 12.

² John iii, 15.

³ Rom. x, 14.

⁴ John xvii, 5.

to wonder what life without the Christian message would be, when we have surmised what chaos and disorder would result in our very civilization as a whole without Christ, that we are likely to appreciate the vital necessity of His influence. If Christ is what He says He is, then His message is not only the true one but the only one for life. 'Whatever else be taken away from us by rational criticism,' wrote John Stuart Mill, 'Christ is still left—a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers. . . . Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity. Nor even now would it be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue, from the abstract to the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'¹

Even Christ as the rule of virtue must be transferred from the abstract to the concrete, He must be removed from the perspective of the past to the context of the living present. It is only when our faith in Him has descended from the heights of mind down into the very marrow of our lives, when our ideas of Him have become flesh and blood within our beings, that our lives can be truly Christian and engage our personality as a whole. Faith in Christ must spread from mind to heart and from mind and heart into life and action. Our lives will then gain from the light of Christ that transfuses them, but as a recompense our convictions, our ideas of Christ, will grow intense and firm. Christ will be a Reality not a name, He will

¹ *Two Essays on Religion*, p. 255.

be in the immediate present and not in past that is remote.

The difference in the attitudes to Christ of those who know *of* Him merely and those who know Him is fundamental. I know no better way of expressing it than by an appeal to Newman's distinction between assents that are merely *notional* and assents that are *real*. This distinction is one of Newman's best contributions to our modern thought. He was a philosopher of the concrete, the old English empiricism lingered with him and was refined, and no one has so luminously shown the difference there is between knowledge that is intense and vital and convincing and knowledge that is remote and pale and unenticing. The difference lies between abstract knowledge and vivid realization of meaning, between conceptual apprehension and intuition, between notional assents and real assents. It is something comparable to the difference between a man's discursive reasoning on human character and a woman's sure and rapid intuition of personality. Or again, a man who has lived some time in America knows America in one way. The man who has never been there also knows America, but in quite a different way. The difference in their knowledge would roughly correspond to Newman's distinction of real and notional assents. *Real* assents are more impressive and affective because they have for objects realities or things as opposed to abstract notions. And it is human nature to be affected more deeply by things than by mere notions.

'Let us consider,' writes Newman, 'how differently young and old are affected by the words of

some classic author, such as Homer or Horace. Passages, which to a boy are but rhetorical common-places, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer may supply, which he gets by heart and thinks very fine . . . at length come home to him, when long years have passed, and he has had experience of life, and pierce him, as if he had never known them, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness.¹ 'And what experience of the world effects for the illustration of classical authors, that office the religious sense, carefully cultivated, fulfills towards Holy Scripture. To the devout and spiritual, the divine Word speaks of things, not merely of notions. And, again, to the disconsolate, the tempted, the perplexed, the suffering, there comes, by means of their very trials, an enlargement of thought, which enables them to see in it what they never saw before. Henceforth there is to them a *reality* in its teaching. . . .'²

This revolution of outlook, this enlargement of experience, is just what must happen in our attitude to Christ. Our assent to Him must become a *real* assent ; Christ must become a Reality for us. Some conversions there have been, of course, where the revolution was radical and entire, when from an attitude of hatred and opposition a man was suddenly changed into a powerful ally of Christ. Such was the history of the Pharisee, Saul, on the road to Damascus. A vision of Christ was vouchsafed to him that changed the whole tenor of his life and action. A life hitherto filled with anti-Christian thought and impulse was brought suddenly

¹ *Apologia pro vita sua*, p. 78.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

to a halt, its course was turned, the passion of the Pharisee, Saul, was transmitted into the zeal of a great apostle, Paul. Half-hearted compromise was not a trait of this man whether Pharisee or Christian and when he saw Christ his surrender was complete, so complete that he could in time with all sincerity say : ' To me to live is Christ.' But it is rather the transmutation of notional into real assent that characterizes these conversions that forms the patrimony of our Christian heritage. Whereas a man's assent to Christ was abstract and notional, affecting only the surface of his life, it suddenly became a force that pierced to the very depths of his personality, unearthing there new springs of life and energy. That something not at all unlike the devastating experience of St. Paul may come to all of us is the common lesson of Christian saints.

In the great apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick, we have a perfect illustration. Patrick was the son of Christian parents. He was educated by priests who were his tutors. He had certainly heard of Christ and believed in Him while yet a boy. Yet, when he came to tell of his conversion, he says expressly that before his capture at the age of sixteen ' he knew not the true God ' and ' was ignorant of the living God.' What could he mean? Was he not here expressing from the depths of his new and real assent to Christ how pale and poor had been his notional assent to Him in his youth? Might not his words be said of any of us, that as yet we know not Christ, we have not that rich experimental contact with Him, He has not yet found His place as a Reality in our lives.

The glory of the Catholic Church, despite the objections of its enemies, is just this ever-recurring phenomenon of whole-hearted reaction to the Personality of Christ which keeps alive the fires of religion upon the earth. Paul's new vision of Christ lighted up the early centuries. St. Patrick flung the rays of this same vision over our own land while, continents removed, the great Augustine was lighting up the East with Christ. In the Middle Ages three men arose who brought Christ into the intimate life of their epoch: St. Bernard, St. Francis, and the Author of the *Imitation*. The tradition has gone on, the torch of Christ has been handed down from century to century until our very day when a Soeur Thérèse challenged her time and ours with a vision of Christ, the Bridegroom.

This, then, is the kind of knowledge of Christ we need. Our reaction to Him must be ever vital, intuitive, rapid. It must be such that in every circumstance it will determine our attitude to life, it must cover all our relations to persons, places, things. Our knowledge of Him must be an efficacious force in our lives, something concrete and intuitive, a veritable 'sense of Christ.' We are said to have a 'sense' of things when, without need for prolonged reflection, our reactions are sure and rapid. A person has the artistic 'sense' when his taste in matters of art has become an instinct. We speak of a person who has a 'sense of responsibility' when on all occasions the seriousness of life has become instinctive. Our knowledge of Christ must become a 'sense,' an 'instinct.' Is not that Christ's own divinely simple solution of

the eternal riddle of human life? 'Learn of Me,' He said. Does not that mean that the secret of full and noble living is to do as Christ would do in all our relations to life? What could be more simple or direct? Christ saw in His own day what a mess men were making of life. He saw the Pharisees make it painful and hollow, laying burdens on life that they themselves would not carry, erecting façades that covered rapine and rottenness within. He saw the crowd disgusted with such hypocrisy, He saw them wearied and in despair, He saw them capitulate to life's lower forces. Everywhere He saw the mass of men with the burden of life upon them, saw it eat into their flesh and blood, and He suggested a yoke, His yoke, that would help men henceforth to bear their burden and find sweetness in it. Christ did not come to add an additional weight to the already loaded burden of life's misery and anguish. He came rather to alleviate, to teach an art of life that would enlarge and sweeten men's experience. In His own life He gave example. His solution is simple. Before taking an important decision for our individual or social life all we need to do is to look at Christ, to evoke in our souls a vision of Him, to saturate ourselves with the thought of Him, and ask: Would Christ have acted so? Would He approve this action of mine? That is a control for action that cannot fail. To put it more tellingly still, is my particular action of the moment worthy of being attributed to Christ? Is it such that it could be ascribed to Him? Here and now I suggest that this approach to life is one that must be successful. Try it. The result will be for our human lives

something of that real peace, that serene composure of spirit, without which life is chaos and disorder. For though the life of Christ did not run smoothly, though the waves of passion and hatred washed over Him until He was submerged in death, yet He gave to the world an unique example of a human life that in its depths was smooth and placid, untouched by life's eventualities, unruffled by the storm and stress that so agitate the lives of men in general.

'The most grave disease of which our age is oppressed,' writes Pope Pius XI, 'and at the same time the fruitful source of all evils deplored by every man of good heart, is that levity and thoughtlessness which carry men hither and thither through devious ways. Hence comes the constant and passionate absorption in external things; hence, the insatiable thirst for riches and pleasures that gradually weakens and extinguishes in the minds of men the desire for more excellent goods, and so entangles them in outward and fleeting things that it forbids them to think of eternal truths, and of Divine laws, and of God Himself. . . .' And what is the remedy the Pope proposes? The Spiritual Exercises of retreat whereby the obstacles to *a true sense of Christ* are removed. A true sense of Christ, an appreciation of what Christ must mean for us, a faith in Christ that will burn into vision.

III

If we seek to know the reason why this vivid sense of Christ has not come into our lives we have not far to seek. Not everybody, said Christ, who says Lord, Lord, will enter into His kingdom.

To know Christ intimately without loving Him is impossible. 'He who saith that he knoweth Him,' says St. John, 'and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.'¹ The proof of love is service. The more service we give to Christ the greater will be our love, and in this instance it is love that gives us eyes to see. It is love proven true in life that ultimately will transform our knowledge into vision.

It is true that already by our faith we have surrendered much to Christ. We have accepted Him at His word and humbled our minds to the mysteries of His revelation. To an extent our whole personality is represented in this submission of our minds. Faith is a vital human act, an act of reason elicited under God's influence but requiring certain moral conditions. Faith is a thought; it is a grace, coming from God; but faith is also an act of good will. If, therefore, faith is to approximate to vision in this life, then it must grow in the three elements that compose it. Intellectually it must grow by a deepening of our knowledge, divinely it must grow by God's increased light, but morally it must grow by a life that is Christian in all its levels. If faith in Christ does not flare up into vision of Him, that may be due to neglect of religious knowledge, never to lack on God's part, but more often does it arise from the simple fact that not enough of our personality in life and action has been surrendered to Him. We compromise with anti-Christian forces, we perhaps betray Christ by sin, we merely dream of holiness and do not live it, whole patches of life exist that bear no

¹ 1 John ii, 4.

relation to Him. In a word, our life entire has not come under His influence and inspiration. But it is only when a human life entirely is lived for Christ that it becomes luminous with Him. For here there is action and reaction. Life always recompenses motives by intensifying them and when Christ is the Motive of one's life Christ Himself is increased for us. Christ then gains in clearness, He emerges from the darkness that surrounds Him, He becomes a Reality, a Personality, God, as it were, in immediate touch with us.

The ultimate explanation of this phenomenon that saints have verified for themselves is given by the saint-philosopher, Aquinas. He was well aware of Newman's distinction between notional and real assent. He emphasized, especially in moral matters, the gulf that lies between speculative ideas and the practical ideas that influence human conduct. An abstract moral principle, he points out, has very little influence on human action. Passions can easily colour and tint men's abstract persuasions so that objects come to be seen in a particularly pleasant light. There is little doubt but that passion can so affect our minds and easily break through the slender barriers that abstract notions erect against its onrush. If moral knowledge is to influence one's life it must be not only light but force, it must not only indicate the way, but actively help us to enter in the way, it must penetrate our organism for it is there it must battle with its inimical force of passion. So insistent on this was St. Thomas that for him an act of virtue suggested by some abstract principle and standing isolately as an act of naked will was not worthy to be named virtue

at all. For him virtue is not virtue until it has passed from will to organism, imprinting on human passions a bent in favour of reason, and is guaranteed by moral principles that have left the region of the abstract to inhabit man's flesh and blood as practical and efficacious ideas. Without this influence of morality over the whole person there is little security for virtue and there can be no real delicacy of moral intuition. In matters of chastity for St. Thomas the man who was really chaste judged accurately and spontaneously by a kind of connatural knowledge, by an attunement of his personality to the ideal of chastity.

Have we not here a suggestion as to what must happen if our knowledge of Christ is to become a force in our lives and if our lives themselves are to enrich our sense of Christ? 'Is anyone sad?' asks St. Bernard. 'Let Jesus into your heart; let His name leap thence to your lips; and behold its light disperses the clouds of darkness like the morning sun, and brings back serenity and peace. Is any falling into sin—aye, even the desperate sin of self-murder? Let him call again upon that saving name; at once his courage and hope will revive. In the presence of that life-giving name who has ever remained fast bound by hardness of heart, vulgar idleness, rancour of mind, or dull accidie? . . . These are the diseases of the soul; this is their remedy. . . . Naught but the name of Jesus can restrain the impulse of anger, repress the swelling of pride, cure the wound of envy, bridle the onslaught of luxury, extinguish the flame of carnal desire—can temper avarice, can put to flight impure and ignoble thoughts. For when I name

the name of Jesus I call unto mind at once a Man meek and lowly of heart, benign, pure, temperate, merciful; a Man conspicuous for every honourable and saintly quality; and also in the same Person the Almighty God—so that He both restores me to health by His example and renders me strong by His assistance. No less than this is brought to mind by the name of Jesus whenever I hear it.’

The secret of St. Bernard was his vision of what Christ meant for him. He saw that the hardest thing to resist in life is temptation. The basis of this power of temptation, whether from without or within us, is the eternal human fact that we are at war with ourselves. At the heart of our lives there is tension and distress; a contradiction between what is best and vilest upsets our balance. In every man, it has been said, there is heaven and hell, an angel and a brute. The distressing fact remains that we see the good and yet do not perform. That which I would, complained St. Paul, I do not. And no matter what freedom we may achieve by natural means, restraining the instinctive tendencies of our natures and bridling the animal impulses that quicken within us, the limit of our achievement is not very distant. We cannot shake off our nature, we cannot force the ‘ape and tiger’ to die completely within us, we do not cease to be endowed with animal propensities. And it is the ‘animal-man’ that constitutes the obstacle to high and noble living. Life is ever a struggle, an overcoming of some obstacle, and in the battle there is a universe around us that conspires with the chaotic instincts within.

Religion has ever been accounted the universal

remedy for this inherent contradiction of our nature. But with what success before the time of Christ? 'The law,' said St. Paul, 'gives only knowledge of sin.' 'But I do not know sin, but by the law; for I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say: Thou shalt not covet.'¹ 'For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I will not, I consent to the law, that is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will, is present with me; but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do.'² This inner testimony of Paul's own personal difficulty found plenty of evidence writ largely over the face of the earth before Christ's coming. In his picture of the pagans he is appalling: 'They walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding obscured with darkness, alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance which was in them, caused by the blindness of their hearts; who despairing gave themselves up to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness unto covetousness.'³ But the vision of Paul is no worse than that of John or of other prophets.

For the knowledge of the law was not enough, it was negative. Something else was required, so

¹ Rom. vii, 7.

² *Ibid.*, 14-19.

³ Eph. iv, 17, 18, 19.

tersely put by Christ: 'Without Me you can do nothing.'¹ When we say religion is required we must mean Christ Himself. For what boy or girl will feel compulsion to do good coming from some abstract religious or ethical principle? There is every likelihood of victory for passions of flesh and blood if the attractiveness of religion has not been rendered concrete and real in the Person of Jesus Christ. That was what St. Bernard so clearly saw. He knew that attraction must be counter-balanced by counter-action. He felt that youth must be tempted in the right way. He found a vision of Christ that could meet the attractiveness of all that the spirit of the world, the devil, or the flesh could suggest in concrete form. All sin implies a loss of God-consciousness, an eclipse in our spiritual vision. No man, says St. Cyril with conviction, could see Jesus and remain for long in sin. A vivid sense of Christ would render Him so near, so vital, and with such compelling majesty that compromise with sin or imperfection were next to impossible. St. Augustine, too, was aware of this. And one of the strongest arguments ever urged for noble living was made by him when, to those inclined to succumb to passion on the plea that the body was of no account, he said: 'If you respect not your body, respect Jesus Christ who is in your body.' Was it not significant that the Apostle Peter denied his Master when he no longer looked upon Him and that, seeing Him again, he was won back to his former allegiance? We are not better than Peter. And if there is to be security in our lives and loyalty to Christ the vision of Him must

¹ John xv, 5.

be ours at every moment. 'Let thy memory have the swiftness of vision,' advised the wise St. Catherine of Siena.

This vision of Christ is ours, burning dimly in the depths of hearts and spirits. Let it develop and grow. Let its rays escape into lives that are truly Christian, for then our lives will enlarge and enhance our vision. 'To him that hath shall be given,' said Christ in another context. But it is life that must rescue from its depths the light of Christ. This is the vision that should be ours in youth, for then is it thwarted and threatened by the riot of passion which brings darkness and death. Youth must ever dream its dreams. But the dream of Christ is broad and beautiful enough to contain all other dreams. He is God. He is the Good Supreme. In Him all things that are were first contained. All that is good and true and beautiful is summed up in Him. Everything that life in God's design can bring forth is contained in Him. But Christ is Man, the most beautiful of the sons of men, the Prince of men, the Leader and the King. What other man has exercised the same spell over the hearts of humanity? Allegiance to Him is romance, religion is chivalry. Christ is God in human shape, Christ is all loveliness and truth and beauty in human form. Christ alone can conquer the adolescent of flesh and blood whose dreams and aspirations so quickly turn to concrete forms and enticing shapes. For Christ demands that those who follow must face life not shirk it, He calls for courage from His disciples, He warns them of the fight that must be fought and won, He asks them to learn of Him. He promises, too, that He will be with

them in the thick of battle, that He will speak within them and that His disciples shall know peace and blessedness. But all His promises are summed up in the single word : life more abundant ; those who follow shall have life, shall ' live.'

That is the power of Christ as He appears to me ; therein lies His victory over the hearts and minds of humanity. Christ can make us ' live,' He can help us to win from life everything that God has put into it, to exhaust its wealth and meaning, and to enrich our persons with the opulence of the Godhead. Put Christ at the centre of a life and that life must expand and develop under His creative influence ; it will grow in beauty and in harmony, for the peace of Christ, the poise and balance of a mind at rest and of a spirit undivided, will be in it ; it must feel the stirrings of unknown enthusiasms ; it must ascend to God as if impelled in adoration and praise ; it will feel the stirrings of unknown enthusiasms that are not cramped or fettered but are as wide as all humanity ; it will be under the urgent necessity of positively doing something for the extension of Christ's interests, for then it will know that Christ has meant something for it. Christ can inspire mind and heart and action, and these are the things of which the life of man on earth is made. Christ is Truth for mind, and no truth exists that is not Christ in disguise. He is the Supreme Good of will and heart, a Good accessible in human form to men and women of flesh and blood. He is the rule of life for action. No life on earth ever possessed such compelling majesty, such moral beauty, such human tenderness, so simple a plan.

We are all apprentices in the school of life. Few of us have yet learned our trade. Few of us, surmising how, have truly lived. But one is our Master, Christ. With our eyes on Him we must learn, and with help from Him we shall succeed. He alone can unify our scattered energies and knit them together in His peace. Peace is not stagnation. Peace can come only of successful living. But peace is power. It is the response of a human spirit in Christ, untroubled by the stress and storm of life, of possible eventualities, and in this repose lies the strength to make of life a success. At any moment you might have gone to Christ and found peace. If Christ is with us, then what of the future? It will be an unfolding arena for the courageous Christian battle of life.

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANS

I

AN old man sat by the wayside. He was clad in rags. Once he was rich and famous ; now he was poor ; he begged. But his greatest poverty was his lack of sight : he was blind. Lost on him were the beauties of this world, of spring in the fields, of the sun that shone in the firmament and of stars that answered in the night. His darkened world, unillumined even by the radiance of childhood's eyes, pressed upon him. And of late he had been hearing of the Wonder-worker, Christ. To gaze upon Him, he thought, would be very heaven. . . .

Then suddenly distant sounds found entrance through his sharpened ears. A throng of people was drawing nigh. Nearer and nearer it came until he could hear distinctly the sound of many feet, the swish of garments, stray bits of conversation that told of the near approach of Christ. He was in the grip of anguish. Soon the throng, and Christ, would have passed. . . . A piercing cry, wrung from the inmost heart of sorrow, arrested the passers-by : ' Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me. . . .' It was impossible to hush the anguish of that cry. The people tried, but to no avail. More piercingly still it cried, heedless of convention and of what

men might think : ' Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.' There was a halt. A hush fell upon the crowd. A Voice of wondrous sweetness came back to him, an answer : ' Son, what wilt thou that I do to thee?' The poor man answered with wistful begging : ' Rabboni, that I may see.' Christ drew near him. He gave him back his sight and the world it revealed to him. But his eyes saw but one thing in that world, the Man who had opened his eyes, the Christ. Seeing Him, remarks the Gospel, the poor man ' followed in the way.'¹

Has this same desire and thought of seeing the Christ never timidly entered our minds or flared up a moment in the darkness of faith wherein we follow Him? Now we see in a glass darkly, but this very twilight of our faith must act at times as incitement to the noonday glory of vision. Who ever loved and would not behold the object of his love, or not see the constant image of the creature that is beloved turn to reality of flesh and blood? Just think of Christ's career, the spell He exercised over the hearts and spirits of humanity. Thousands left their cities to hear His Voice, to follow Him in desert places with no thought for food and drink. Friends ministered to him in His human needs and felt not the labour of their ministry. We love Christ, and did our love but give us vision, then we, too, should willingly serve Him.

Is there, then, no proof of love in this darkness of our faith? Is our faith just merely darkness and not the beginning of a vision? Has Jesus disappeared for ever out of the ranks of men and women? Do the roads no longer echo to His

¹ Mark x, 51.

footfalls, and to throngs of people that surrounded Him in life? Is the Voice of Christ no longer on the breeze, or is it stilled for ever?

I will tell you of another man. He is a proud, harsh man. He had made a name for himself in Jerusalem and was at the peak-point of his career. See him as he leaves the great city, seated on a charger, with a band of followers. The good wishes of Jerusalem go with him. He is the idol of his race, and now he is embarking on some fresh enterprise of religious fanaticism. He takes the road that leads to Damascus. All goes well. . . . Then suddenly something happens. He is struck from his horse, as by lightning, and the vision of the present world leaves him. A new world opens on him, its radiance is about him, and he hears a Voice: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And Saul answered: 'Who art thou, Lord?' And the Voice replies: 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.'¹

What a shock for the blinded Saul must have been this astounding revelation of Christ. Had not Christ been killed? The Jewish people had rid themselves of Him. He no longer walked the earth. It was true that a small band of insignificant people went by the name of Christians, but Saul himself had been almost successful in exterminating them, much to the liking of the official religion of his day. But meeting Christ on the road to Damascus? That was impossible. And yet the Voice was the solemn Voice of Christ, and it demanded simply: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?' And to Saul's inquiry it replied directly, and

¹ Acts ix, 5.

without evasion : ' I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.'

It was in this disturbing fashion that the vision of Christ came to Saul, the Pharisee, a vision that revolutionized his being and transformed the Pharisee into Christ's Apostle to the Gentiles. The mission of Paul was to give this new vision to the world that lay beyond the confines of Judea, to cast its rays into the universe entire, for the Christ who so identified Himself with the actual Christians of Paul's day was potentially one with all humanity. To his dying day, the teaching of this new Apostle of Christ was that Christ and Christians are one ; he exhausts his ingenuity in bringing it home to his contemporaries ; his pen trembles with the new images that flow to it from his newly-found vision. The reality which he had in mind surpassed every image that he could summon, metaphors sounded empty as they conveyed an idea of it, for the vision of Paul is best expressed by a vital unity of Christ and Christians that is as ineffable as life itself.

The crescendo that is noticeable in the Pauline analogies, whereby he expresses the oneness of Christ and Christians, is one that begins long after the most intense moral union of Christ and Christians has been conceived. This oneness is not born merely of a moral union, of external association, or community of aim and interest : it is a unity of life. For this unity of life the Apostle makes use of all the unities that this vital thing suggests : unity of body, unity of spirit, unity of Person. When he has recourse to the metaphor of our being ' clothed ' with Christ,¹ he has already in mind a spiritual

¹ Rom. xiii, 14.

clothing, or informing, which is something much more intrinsic than his metaphor may at first sight suggest: 'For all of you who were baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.'¹ 'As then ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him.'² Here we are far removed from a mere moral union of Christians with Christ. Further, the union is one whereby Christians become 'one body in Christ.'³ 'For as the body is one and has many members . . . so also it is with Christ.'⁴ But already this unity of body, whereby Christians being 'many' are one with Christ, results, in the mind of the Apostle, from the more intimate union of spirit. 'For in one spirit were we all baptised unto one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, and Jesus is the chief and His Spirit is the soul of this body, into which all members are united.'⁵ 'If there be a natural body, there is also a spiritual body, as it is written: The first man Adam was made into a living soul; the last Adam into a quickening spirit. Yet that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, earthy; the second man from heaven, heavenly.'⁶ 'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . But all these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who apportioneth severally to each as He will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, many as they are, form one body; so also is it with Christ. For in one Spirit all we . . . were baptised unto one body . . .

¹ Gal. iii, 27.² Col. ii, 6.³ Rom. xii, 5.⁴ I Cor. xii, 12.⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.⁶ I *Ibid.*, xv, 45-47.

and were all given to drink of one Spirit.’¹ The climax of the Apostle’s teaching, however, is not reached until he has penned those strong words to the Ephesians, that Christ and Christians are one Person. He is describing the charity of God which makes no distinction of Jew and Gentile, when the phrase occurs : ‘ But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in His flesh : Making void the law of commandments contained in decrees ; *that He might make the two (Jews and Gentiles) in Himself into one new man, in peace.*’² The Apostle who had received the vision of Christ on the road to Damascus came to read the history and aims of Christianity in its light : ‘ He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He gave some apostles, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the ages of the fulness of Christ : that henceforth we be no mere children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive. But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ : for whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every

¹ 1 Cor. xii, 4-13.

² Eph. ii, 13-15.

joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the building up of itself in charity.¹

In this transition from the poor man described by St. Mark to the conversion of St. Paul I have been carrying you from blindness to blindness. You will not have missed the suggestiveness of this approach nor the overpowering conviction that the new vision of Christ brings with it. In the episode of conversion we have Christ's own assurance of His identity with Christians, and in the Apostle's inspired teaching we have God employing Paul as His instrument and mouthpiece to express His Mind. Should any doubt still linger, if Christ has not yet begun to emerge from the background of humanity to grip you as that vision laid hold of Saul, I will give you just one other picture. It is a vision of Christ that one day will infallibly sear and burn the eyes of those who failed to see Him on earth. Raise your eyes and look. See Him as He will come in judgement. See the nations of the earth beneath Him: that mass of humanity, men and women, in whom He lived. Hear the thunder of His Voice as it reaches those in darkness: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. . . . For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me not in; naked, and you clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' And they, as proof of blindness, will make one final protest: 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger and naked, or sick and in prison, and did not minister to Thee?'

¹ Eph. iv, 10-16.

And He will answer : ' Amen I say to you : As long as you did it not to one of these My least brethren, you did it not to Me.' They had been blind in life ; they had not seen Christ in Christians. Seeing Him not, they had never helped Him. For that reason they stood condemned.

II

The request of the blind man by the wayside, ' Lord, that I may see,' is a parable. We have need of vision. We need to see Christ. We need especially to see Him in the poor. The love that we profess for Christ in heaven must go out to Him on earth. For ' what God hath joined together,' as is said in another context, ' let no man put asunder.' Christ and Christians are one, and if poverty has been chosen by Him as His dwelling place of choice, that is simply because the poor have more need of Him.

' Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor,' says Scripture. But of poverty we have little understanding until first we have graded it and then seen the intimacy of its relation to Jesus Christ. There is a palpable and obvious poverty which we associate with pale wan faces and tattered rags : physical poverty. Secondly, there is an intellectual poverty, the absence of education and ideas in the presence of false, erroneous doctrines : intellectual poverty. Finally, there is the direst poverty of all : the lack of Christ ; men hungry for want of the knowledge of Christ, or men and women bereft of Christ : moral poverty.

Even then, who is there amongst us who has

sensed the deepest meaning of poverty, its intimate relation to Jesus Christ? The celebrated preacher, Bossuet, told the rich and cultured society of his day that in the kingdom of Christ's Church the poor come first, and that the rich are admitted to the Church on condition that they serve the poor. And I tell you on the part of God that neither you nor I have understood the dignity of poverty until we have seen the poor vested in the light of Christ.

And why? For two reasons. In the first place, we are not mere philanthropists or humanitarians: we do not worship that sorry abstraction, humanity. Our love does not go out directly to the poor. It must first ascend to heaven, and there find a vitality and a driving force that is not merely of the earth. What is this new vitality? It is Christ Himself, who became Man, who identified Himself with men, who has told us explicitly that He and the poor are one. The logic of that is inescapable: neglect the poor, and you neglect Christ. Secondly, it is only in the light of this vision that our attitude to the poor will be true and proper. What would you think of a rich man who would scatter money to a hungry crowd and enjoy the spectacle of a life-and-death struggle for his coins of misery? But the poor are no crowd separated from us by any chasm. Our relations to them are not external. The poor are nearer to us than we can ever imagine. They are as close to us as the members of our body are to one another. The bond between rich and poor is the living Person, Jesus Christ.

Either this was the great thought that filled the Mind of Christ in His last days on earth or I know absolutely nothing of Him. Already in His life He

had singularly enlarged God's precept of charity, rejecting the Jewish doctrine of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' and imposing the duty of forgiveness that was unbounded by any limit. But in the atmosphere of that final scene, when He gave proofs of love that could never be questioned, He gained the right, as it were, to impose on Christians a love of Christians that would equal His own. 'A new commandment I give unto you : that you love one another as I have loved you.' The very sacrament He gave them was a sacrament of unity, wherein those that partook became one with Him. Not only that, but triumphantly He went on to indicate the only title to the name, Christian : 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.'

Charity was to be the sign whereby Christ's followers should be marked off. Segregated from what ? From the 'world.' And the 'world,' what does it signify ? Open St. John, and there you will see it pictured as a scene of chaos and disorder, of ferocious struggles, of selfishness disrupting all peace and harmony. Because of egoism individuals are isolated, divided one from another ; classes develop a corporate ambition which is only another form of self versus self. That is just the essential evil of the 'world,' a universe where human beings are isolated and opposed, strangers to one another, making the very word 'world' or cosmos, which means order, a scene of chaos. 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God : and this is anti-Christ, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in

the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome him. Because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. . . . Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God. And everyone that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God : for God is charity.¹

III

The precept of Christian charity has a twofold aspect, positive and negative. Against the positive precept are sins of commission, whether of thought, or word, or deed. I will not elaborate this aspect of the question, except to say that at the back of all uncharitableness is an attitude of mind, of thought. That attitude is possible only when the vision of Christ is dim. Bear in mind that, on last analysis, all positive sinning against charity is an attempt not only on Christians but on Christ, and all divisions amongst Christians spell the appalling thing that was in the mind of St. Paul when he asked : 'Is Christ then divided?' Whatever be your differences, let your unity in Christ be deeper.

The negative side of charity needs more attention because its significance is liable to be missed. It is not enough to be satisfied with not sinning positively against charity : our sins of omission are more likely to cry out against us on the final day of retribution. It is not enough, in other words, never positively to sin against Christ by uncharitableness, for until we have positively begun to do something for Him we have not begun

¹ 1 John iv, 2-8.

to feel the urge of Christ within. Every Christian is an apostle in this sense: he is called upon to give testimony to the vision of Christ that is his by faith.

For that reason the threefold poverty that I have just sketched for you is a universe in which you can work for Christ. There are institutions in your midst, born out of the brain and minds of men and women who saw Christ in poverty. You can help. Christ identifies Himself with the poor; they are His living garment; they are living sacraments of Him. If you begin to see Christ in the poor, you will not see Him in want. When poverty pleads it is Christ that pleads, His hands are outstretched for help, His eyes appeal. Alms may mean a sacrifice, active help may demand your time. But think of Christ, who 'being rich became poor for our sakes; that through His poverty we may become rich.'¹ When St. Paul was carrying alms to the faithful in Jerusalem, he prayed that the oblation of his service might be acceptable to them. We are no greater than Paul. The poor are no less than Christ. Alms-giving, then, is an offering to Christ who offers our oblation to God. Service thus takes on the character of rite and liturgy, becomes an act of religion potent even to wipe out sin: 'For alms delivereth from death and the same is that which purgeth away sins and maketh to find mercy and everlasting life.'²

Physical poverty is but the first degree of a growing want that goes from body to mind. There is an intellectual poverty and a corresponding intellectual charity. If the physical poverty of our

¹ 2 Cor. viii, 9.

² Tobias xii, 9.

day is appalling, if the distribution of the world's wealth is evoking protests from all quarters, who will cry out against the lack of intellectual charity of men, unthinking or with malice, who pour into minds the poison of false doctrines and subversive ideas? How is this desperate want of responsibility to be met except by a band of intellectuals who will exercise a charity of intelligence and give to uneducated minds the opulence of truth? Whence are they to come if not from the places of learning in our midst, from universities and schools?

The phrase 'intellectual charity' is one constantly associated with the name of that Breton mystic, Ernest Hello, who was one of the first to unmask his compatriot, Renan, and who rightly diagnosed the Romantic malady of his time as 'mysticism gone wrong,' and wisely said: 'The hour will come when whoever has contributed, either positively or negatively, by act or by negligence, to the satisfaction or the non-satisfaction of the needs of a soul, will be astounded at the consequences of what may once have seemed to him an unimportant decision.'¹ True charity, Hello remarks, is that which divines the needs of others. But there are needs and needs, and the deep poverty we must see is that of mind, of spirit. If the world, as Keats puts it, is a place where 'souls are made,' the vision of faith reveals the earth as a place of souls, hungry in mind for the light of truth. Instinctively Hello had come to the heart of a problem which has harassed the minds of men. As long as men think, they will go back to the

¹ See *Life, Science and Art* (Angelus series), ed. by M. Walker.

problem of reconciling God's Will to save all men with the tremendous fact of the eternal loss of many, and will ask if a Divine predestination does not involve, somehow, an antecedent condemnation of the wicked. But when we consider that the object of the Divine Will is an order of things rather than the individual soul, we begin to realize that there is no contradiction in God's desiring the salvation of all, though foreseeing the damnation of some, in the particular order of His Providence selected. But more, we realize a certain inevitableness about the inner nature of this order; we begin to see, what Hello instinctively felt, an order of souls in which there is interdependency of one upon the other and in which no one will be damned or saved alone. 'Although they do not know each other, strangers are for ever calling to strangers in the darkness and immensity of the night of the world. Those who control the Press are the organs of these voices. If we could perceive the invisible world, we should see hands stretched out, we should hear the moans of the poor in intellect, the cries of those who die of hunger.'

The third kind of poverty is scarcely distinguishable from poverty of mind under certain aspects, but moral poverty may be present in those who, having once known Christ, have lost Him. But moral poverty, the total lack of Christ, is most prominent in those who never heard His name. The story goes that, in some foreign clime, a missionary once met a mother and her child. To the child he said: 'I hope you are a good child and that you love Jesus.' He noticed in the child's eyes a quizzical look of wonder, and as he went

his way, the little one was heard to ask : ‘ Mummie, who is Jesus ? ’ There was pathos in that question, and poverty. Are we going to keep the secret, or rather shall we not by prayer and sacrifice and active co-operation help the Church’s effort to preach Christ to all creation ?

The love that is in your hearts for Christ must give you eyes to see. Be not deceived. Christ is in heaven ; He is in the Most Blessed Sacrament. But He is also on the earth, He is one with Christians, and all humanity belongs to Him. Then love Him where He is. Love is proved by service. Do something for Him. If you do not know precisely what you are to do, then ask for something to do. ‘ We have need, all of us,’ said Ozanam, ‘ of something which may possess and uplift us, which may dominate our thoughts and elevate them. We have need of poetry in the midst of this cold, prosaic world and, at the same time, of a philosophy to give reality to our ideal conceptions. This double blessing we find in our Catholic faith. There, then, is the point of departure of all the labours of our intelligence, of all the dreams of our imagination. . . . Let us not leave our beliefs in a domain of speculation and theory ; let us take them seriously and make our lives bear their continual impression.’

One day we shall have to leave behind us everything—wealth, renown, success. One thing alone will go with us, the memory of our lives. A momentary glance at our past reveals the peak-points of our lives, moments when we ‘ lived ’ by selfless love shown in trifling things not worth mentioning, hidden kindnesses, apostolate. It is significant that the gospel of St. Matthew emphas-

izes the nature of our judgement as one wherein our lot shall be decided by the things we failed to do. It would be erroneous, of course, to take this view of Final Judgement as exhaustive. But it does suggest an important aspect of it. Nor could it well be otherwise. The withholding of love is the negation of the spirit of Christ, a proof that Christ meant little in our lives, that we failed to see Him and in our blindness did not minister to the needs of humanity which are the needs of Christ imprisoned, hungering, naked. . . . 'As long as you did it not to one of these My least brethren, you did it not to Me.'

CHAPTER VII

CHRIST OR COMMUNISM ?

I

IN the stress and storm of life, when lowering clouds fill the horizon, panic sometimes grips the heart of men and tortures their imaginations with dark forebodings. In such moments the imperative need of human sanity is vision. Light must be found to reveal the causes of impending crises, and to indicate the path that leads to security and peace. The present world-crisis is not a purely economic one: the real bankruptcy is one of religion rather than of wealth. The modern world has been consistently striving to break with Christ, and now it finds itself struggling in the abyss of its own darkness for having shut its mind to Him who described Himself as the Light of the world.¹

No social, political, or economic problem of any real dimensions is ever purely social, political,

¹ 'With God and Jesus Christ excluded from political life, with authority derived not from God, but from man, the very basis of that authority has been taken away, because the chief reason of the distinction between ruler and subject has been eliminated. The result is that human society is tottering to its fall, because it has no longer a secure and solid foundation.'

PIUS XI, *Ubi arcano*.

or economic. Sociological thought outside the Church has been oscillating between two extreme views of man's relations to society, both of which are equally unsatisfactory. Individualism regards the individual as supreme and absolute, and subordinates the State and society to his interests. State absolutism, on the other hand, absorbs the individual completely and looks upon the State as the real source and ultimate end of the individual. Both views are erroneous, for if, as Individualism holds, the individual is supreme, how then can the State run counter to his interests or make the interests of many individuals to converge towards a common goal? But to suppress the individual completely, as does State absolutism, is no solution either. We need a system that will safeguard the dignity of human personality and at the same time ensure authority in the State to harmonize the diverging interests of many individuals. Such a system demands that both the individual and the State are subordinate to God as ultimate End of both. In a word, the whole social problem leads directly and inevitably to God as Source and End of man and of society.¹ And that is tantamount to saying that the social problem is ultimately a problem that is religious, involving man's dependence on God.

No social problem or crisis then can ever be purely political or economic: it must ultimately be religious in nature and origin. 'The central conviction which has dominated my mind ever since I began to write,' says Mr. Christopher

¹ See my book, *Life and Religion*, pp. 166-183, for a fuller discussion of the social aspect of human life.

Dawson, 'and which has increased in intensity during the last twenty years, is the conviction that the society or culture which has lost its spiritual roots is a dying culture, however prosperous it may appear externally. Consequently the problem of social survival is not only a political or economic one; it is above all things religious, since it is in religion that the ultimate spiritual roots both of society and of the individual are to be found. When a man has found his roots, he has found his religion, and the irreligious man is precisely the man without roots who lives on the surface of existence and recognizes no ultimate spiritual allegiance.'¹

No more striking proof of this historically could be found than that supplied by the phenomenon of Bolshevism. The paradox of Bolshevism is that while it is an anti-religious movement it is itself steeped in an atmosphere that is religious. Bolshevism is no mere economic theory, or purely political programme. Its very strength lies in the fact that it is a philosophy of life, an integral and complete philosophy that boasts solutions for all human problems and demands allegiance from the whole man. In an age of scepticism and relativity it purports to have found immutable principles that govern Nature, the life of man, and history entire. Its exponents and its revolutionaries are not looking for mere political power: they regard themselves as apostles of a new era destined to bring true redemption to humanity. Communism has inspired asceticism and sacrifice in its exponents, their minds are filled with apocalyptic

¹ *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, p. vi.

visions, they envisage a new era and a new kingdom, the kingdom of man on earth. That such a movement should have for end and aim the abolition of all religion is paradoxical and strange. But it is a fact and a portent. Bolshevism stands for a new gospel, a gospel of no religion, but the driving force of Bolshevism amounts to a fanaticism that is religious. Man cannot rid himself of religion: religion is at the heart of human life, and, therefore, no social or economic problem is purely social or economic: economic crisis points to crisis in religion itself.

There is nothing to be gained by shirking this. Bolshevism is the logical result of a bourgeois Capitalism cut adrift from true religion's inspiration. Men unprejudiced like Nicholas Berdyaev,¹ men versed in the history and psychology of Bolshevism like Waldemar Gurian,² have seen this very clearly. Their opinion, endorsed by Mr. Christopher Dawson, may be tersely stated by saying that 'Bolshevism is at once the product of bourgeois society and the judgement upon it. It reveals the goal to which the secret philosophy of that society leads, if accepted with unflinching

¹ Berdyaev was at one time a follower of Karl Marx. To-day he is the implacable enemy of Bolshevism. He is interested in Communism not only as a fact but, in its historical significance, as capable of influencing the fate of our Western civilization. He is a member of the Orthodox Church. See his book, *The Russian Revolution*, Essays on Order (No. 6), Sheed and Ward; also Daniel Rops, *Nicolas Berdiaeff devant le communisme*, *La vie intellectuelle*, xxii, no. 1, pp. 79-90.

² Gurian, W., *Bolshevism: Theory and Practice*, trans. by E. I. Watkin, p. 4 (Sheed and Ward).

logic.¹ The truth of this can scarcely be denied. Bolshevism is the logical outcome of that divorce of religion from public life and economic affairs that was the outstanding feature of nineteenth-century economic thought. The liberal thinkers and statesmen of the nineteenth century regarded religion and general culture as independent phenomena. For them religion was purely a private matter of individual conscience: religion had nothing to do with social and economic life. But a religion so impaired, so driven into the hidden sanctuary of private lives, was in good way to disappear: a religion that could not influence practical life might as well be absent. In any case it was bound to fall into discredit. Out of Liberalism grew that complete secularization of social and economic life that dominates the nineteenth and the present century. But the complete secularization of life is only a step to the entire dissolution of religion. Liberalism divorced religion from economic and social life. Bolshevism goes one step further. It eliminates religion altogether and eliminates it on principle. The principle is supplied by Marx in his philosophy of history. According to Marx the determining factor of life and history is the economic factor. The mode of production determines the social character of all human, political and spiritual processes. 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their existence that determines their consciousness.'² Accordingly, we are ready for the

¹ Dawson, C., op. cit., p. 28.

² A good exposition of Marxian philosophy may be found in G. Plekanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*

complete absorption of the individual by society, and society itself, whole and entire, is the result of economic factors alone. Religion is thus got rid of, and society can be itself only when the obstacle of religious belief will have been removed.

The justice of this conception of the development of Bolshevism is easily grasped once we remember the exact import of nineteenth century Liberalism. What was the social policy of this school of thought? It was the policy of *laissez-faire* propounded by the Physiocrats and endorsed by Adam Smith in his celebrated work, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). The essence of this philosophy was what Adam Smith called the 'natural liberty' of economic phenomena. The economic world was looked upon as ruled by economic laws as inevitable in their operation as the laws of physics. To attempt to interfere with such laws, therefore, was futile: they worked out inevitably to their fruits and consequences. To think of interfering with them was simply to court disaster and to jeopardize the chances of national welfare. It follows that on such a view any interference on the part of the State with the liberty of production and distribution, or with free competition for markets (the market for labour included), would rank as political and social heresy. Adam Smith's general doctrine favoured the view that general welfare is best secured when every man pursues his own self-

(Marxist Library No. 1), and N. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism*, trans. 3rd ed. For criticism see B. Lavaud, O.P., *La philosophie de Bolchevisme*, *Revue Thomiste*, N.S. XV, Nos. 72-73, pp. 599-633; also Paschal Larkin, O.M.Cap., *Marxian Socialism*, *passim*.

interest. Naturally the statesmen and ruling classes were only too anxious to accept this philosophy. Smith's successors, Ricardo and Malthus, went even further in their emphasis of the impossibility of changing economic laws. The net result was to put the weapon of economic science into the hands of these statesmen and ruling classes. The deplorable condition of the workers had thus the approval of economic science, which showed that such a state of things was the inevitable result of economic laws.¹

Logically, then, Communism is a natural reaction against bourgeois Capitalism, which is itself the product of Liberalism. But it is more than that: it is a most powerful indictment of Liberalism as a system. In this indictment lies the only truth that Bolshevism can boast. When Bolshevism condemns the existing abuses of a system of Capitalism which claims the sanction of economic law for the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, when Bolshevism protests against the growth of wealth side by side with appalling pauperism, when Bolshevism turns our eyes upon a system that condones the destruction of superfluous goods that are needed by the many (simply to fill the pockets of the few), we must agree. Bolshevism is right: a Pope, before it, had condemned the self-same system. 'Working men,' wrote Leo XIII, 'have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition . . . so that a small number of very

¹ See Watt, S.J., L., 'Rerum Novarum' and the Evolution of Capitalism in Great Britain, *XL anniversario della enciclica 'Rerum Novarum,'* Milano, p. 630.

rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.' We are not supporters of Communism. But neither are we blinded by the hue and cry of many moderns against its menace. Much of this hue and cry is hypocritical and insincere. In the mouths of those whose sole fear is for comfort and accumulated capital these protests are no better than the protests of the Communists themselves. The Bolshevik boldly invokes class-hatred as an inspiration. But the class-hatred of the 'very rich few' is only thinly veiled by so-called democracy. The day when statesmen and economists said that religion has no place in public life, social, civic, or economic, they signed their fate: Communism was inevitable as a result and as a judgement upon them. Communism is a strong indictment of such a system; it is an indictment of so-called Christians. Only a religion intimately related to life, meeting life in all its phases, governing and inspiring human processes in all their manifestations, private, civic, social and international, could have averted Communism. In a Christian world, living up to the ideals of Christ, Communism would have had no entry. And if it has appeared, ready to menace the civilization of the West, that can only be because room was made for it by the absence of Christian principles, by the divorce of religion from life for which Liberalism was responsible. But is Communism an indictment of Christianity and of the Catholic Church as well? That question can be answered only in the light of a true idea of the social mission of the Church.

II

What is the social mission of the Church? It is essential here to be clear on principles. The Church is set up like a sign to be contradicted and it has to bear the brunt of assaults from every side. In one age it is criticized and condemned for what in other epochs it was extolled and praised. Opposing and conflicting arguments are urged against her. It is not long since the Church was looked upon as the enemy of science: a supposed conflict existed between her faith and reason. And then she condemned modernism and showed herself the friend of reason. To-day the battle-ground is society. Bolshevism will have it that the Church is the enemy of all progress and prosperity and alleviation of the masses; and Bolshevism forgets the Church's denunciation of Liberalism. But the one infallible way of meeting such attacks is to have a clear and accurate idea of the Church's social mission.

It is certain that there is quite an amount of thinking that is vague on this question, just as there was when the Church was supposed to be the opponent of science. This vagueness betrays itself in two opposing attitudes that are prevalent, attitudes both equally extreme and false. On the one hand, there is the condemnation of the Church because of economic crises and bad times, the idea being that the Church is responsible or at least bound to intervene and settle things for the State. On the other, there is the widespread idea that the Church has nothing whatever to say in social or economic spheres. These attitudes are evidently opposed.

Bolshevism, of course, makes its own the first extreme view. Religion is the root of social evil, and since the Church stands for religion, the Church must be condemned. In a little brochure entitled *The Social Rôle of the Church*, Lenin, starting from the principle that religion is man-made, sees the origin of religion in a capitalistic society in the misery of the exploited worker seeing satisfaction in the belief in a future and a better world. Just as the savage in his powerlessness before natural forces created gods and demons, so at the origin of all religion is fear, fear inspired by the blind, crushing force of Capitalism. Born of fear, then, religion teaches submission and its aim is twofold, to justify the actual conditions of things and to forbid revolt against exploitation by the menace of eternal punishments. Submission, fear, and a certain assuagement in the hope of a future life are the contributions of the Church.

With the injustice of these criticisms of the Catholic Church I shall not now delay. There is just a second point in this erroneous view that claims attention. If the Church is not actually blamed as by Communism, there is the more widespread idea that at least the Church is somehow responsible and should be more constructive in her attitude towards the economic problems of the age. In times of crisis, when unemployment has become an outstanding problem, the thought of Catholics is almost always: what is the Church doing? At the back of this attitude is the thought that it is the social mission of the Church to get us out of all kinds of difficulties. The implicit assumption is that the Church should intervene,

should get down to the last detail of economic problems, and one would imagine that it is the social office of the Church to solve the problems of unemployment within the State.

I wish to say immediately that criticisms arising out of such an attitude are unfounded. They are based on a false idea of the precise social mission of the Church. The Church has one great mission, and one great mission only. That mission has to do with religion and the inculcation of the moral law. That is the *raison d'être* of her existence. Never has the Church taken to herself the duty of indicating any social reform that has not its roots in religion. She has never looked upon herself as the mere coadjutor of the State, nor has she set herself merely to consolidate the bases of society. No economic policies or social programmes, as apart from religion, have emanated from her. The Church is herself a perfect society with one sole object, the teaching of the Christian religion. She is well aware that the State is also a society with rights and duties of its own. And the present Holy Father has said, in the matter of private ownership for instance, that 'to define in detail these duties (that arise out of the social character of private ownership) when the need occurs and when the natural law does not do so, is the function of the Government.'¹

In this the attitude of the Catholic Church is that of her Founder, Jesus Christ. On one occasion two young men came to Him from the midst of a crowd, and said to Him, 'Master, speak to my brother that he may divide the inheritance with

¹ *Quadragesimo Anno*, C.T.S. (London), p. 22.

me.' 'Man,' replied Jesus, 'who made Me a judge or divider over you?' And then He added the significant remark : 'Take heed that ye beware of covetousness . . .'

The second type of criticism, however, is even more prevalent. According to this the Church has nothing to say in matters social or economic ; society and public needs are things with which the Church has no concern. Religion is each one's private concern, and if Communism is a social or economic doctrine, then it can be held : it is outside the province of the Church to enter into such matters.

This idea is still more erroneous than the preceding one ; it is the idea of religion divorced from life which is the root and source of all present economic evils. It is true that the mission of the Church is to teach religion, but in the very nature of things religion is no mere private or personal affair ; it is a social manifestation. Religion is not personal or private, for the simple reason that the life of the individual can never be merely personal or private. The social aspect of life is written deeply in the life of the individual, since man is naturally intended for society wherein he can most conveniently develop his personality. Man is born naturally to take his place in society, and accordingly his life will have a social as well as a personal aspect. Now religion has to do with the whole man, and accordingly it will have a social as well as a personal significance. It is here that the Catholic Church differs most from liberal Protestantism, which emphasizes the individual isolated relation of the human soul to God. The Church, on the contrary,

not only admits the place of temporal society but looks upon the existence of her children as due to her, the Society established by Christ on earth.

It follows that the religion inculcated by the Catholic Church does take notice of the social character of man's life. The Church, indeed, has always emphasized the fact that religion has a social as well as a personal significance. The Church never countenanced the view that religion is a private or purely personal concern, but has always claimed that the whole range of human activities, individual, civic and social, must be regulated by the laws laid down by Christ. At no stage in her history has the Church been indifferent to material welfare, although her chief concern is undoubtedly man's eternal interests. Even in the 'ages of faith,' the Middle Ages, when people generally were interested in religion and in eternal salvation, the Church did not pursue a *laissez-faire* policy in matters economic or social.¹

In the nineteenth century, when the representative of the Church, the Pope, was driven into the Vatican, the Church did not cease to reiterate her right to speak authoritatively on economic and social life. It was then that the Catholic Church challenged the ruling policy of the day, Liberalism. When States attempted to arrogate to themselves exclusive authority in social matters and tried to confine the Church to sacristies, Leo XIII issued his Encyclicals delineating the right relations that ought to hold between Church and State, class and class. He warned the nations with these tremendous

¹ See Paschal, O.M.Cap., Fr., 'The Social Message of the Church,' *Capuchin Annual* (1931), pp. 223-228.

words, that 'the life which Christ dispenses must penetrate all the members and all the parts of the body politic; laws, institutions, schools, families, houses of the rich, workshops of the workers.' And he added significantly: Let no man deceive himself: to a great extent civilization depends on that. To what extent indeed is apparent from the corruption of Bolshevism, which testifies to disease in the body of the modern world.

Pope Pius X carried on the same tradition. His motto, 'the restoration of all things in Christ,' was significant of his ambitious programme. And to the Bishops of France, in 1910, he declared that 'to work for the reform of civilization is a religious work of the first importance; for there is no true civilization without a moral civilization, and there is no true moral civilization without the true religion.' The present Holy Father writes exactly in the same strain: 'It is not, of course, the office of the Church to lead men to transient and perishable happiness only, but to that which is eternal; indeed the Church believes that it would be wrong for her to interfere without just cause in such earthly concerns. But she can never relinquish her God-given task of interposing her authority, not indeed in temporal matters, for which she has neither the equipment nor the mission, but in all those that have a bearing on moral conduct. For the deposit of truth entrusted to Us by God, and Our weighty office of propagating, interpreting, and urging, in season and out of season, the entire moral law, demands that both social and economic questions be brought within Our supreme jurisdiction, in so far as they refer to moral issues.'

Here we have clarity of ideas and a vision that is unwavering in its light. It is the mission of the Church to teach men religion and to inculcate the entire moral law which Christ so intimately linked up with His religion. But the moral law envisages the whole man and every human manifestation, and there will be necessarily points of contact between Church and State. To the Church belongs the right of indicating her territory, and she will speak authoritatively on matters social and economic. The Church has been true to that mission. In every age the Church has warned her members against the allurements of avarice and cupidity. In every age the Church has emphasized the social character of wealth, the brotherhood of man, and the solidarity of society. The same Voice has re-echoed throughout the length and breadth of the world in the Pope's recent Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*.

If to-day the world's economic machinery is jamming and causing great distress in society, that is not entirely due to technical defects. Communism is a blatant indictment of Christians, but not of the Christian Church. And for Catholics it ought to serve as an examination of conscience. It is a sad fact that we Catholics do not always live up to our moral principles, or that we Catholics conform to the business practice of those who have no moral principles. It is still more sad and tragic when Catholics are found who seem to think that business transactions are outside the pale of moral standards. Father O'Leary (an t-Athair Peadar) in his sermons used to tell a little story that has a touch of realism and is perfectly apposite in this context :

it illustrates the more or less unconscious union of religion and sharp practice in business matters. The scene, a shop at night. It is after business hours. The boss is upstairs: down below, the assistant, Johnny. Suddenly a voice is heard. 'Johnny,' said the voice, 'have you mixed the sand with the sugar?' 'Yes, sir,' came the reply. 'Johnny,' came the voice, 'have you mixed the water with the milk?' 'Yes, sir,' answered Johnny. 'Johnny, have you mixed the lime with the flour?' 'Yes, sir . . .' 'All right, Johnny. Come up and let us say the Rosary in God's name.' The story may seem hard on shopkeepers. But it is a perfect illustration of that divorce of religion from business which in miniature is the history of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is that divorce which is responsible for Communism. But the Church itself is untouched. On the contrary, the only rightful enemy of Bolshevism, the only Institution with power to speak is the Catholic Church. And the clash of Communism and the Church is the clash of two worlds: it is the enmity of Satan and of Christ. That will be the third section of this chapter: to show why the Catholic Church must be the implacable enemy of Bolshevism, and why it is that Communism in its progress must break against the Rock. This does not mean that Communism may not achieve a certain amount of success, for Communism is free to employ instruments that the Church could not touch. This does not mean that material success is a guarantee of justice and of right. But in this conflict the Church, like Christ defeated, will and must prevail.

III

It is not difficult to surmise why the clash of the Church and Communism is radical and entire. It was to teach men religion and to insist on the moral law that Christ instituted His Church. Christ had linked up morality with religion. He insisted on the Decalogue as basis of all social structure. And to the Church He promised the assurance of His Spirit in her mission. She is of God. She stands for God and for the rights of God. When these rights are questioned or judged she rises to the full stature of her divinity and will not bend or compromise. When the clash comes we see her engage in a struggle. And a clash can come in either of two ways: when a civilization fails to discover true values and divorces religion from the business of everyday life, or when a civilization as a whole refuses to acknowledge the rights of God. When Liberalism divorced religion from economics the Church protested, and when to-day Communism denies the rights of God, the Church will not capitulate to Communism.

For what is Communism? Communism contains three elements that go to constitute it as a system and are, therefore, inseparable from it. In the first place, Communism stands for the denial of God and for the rejection of religion, which has God for Object. Secondly, Communism insists upon the abolition of private property. Thirdly, the deepest element in Communism is a class-war and a class-hatred, openly and consciously fanned to flames, as a driving force to bring about the disappearance of religion and the spoliation of private property.

I admit I have not gone to Russia to discover this ; nor is there any real need to go, if we wish merely to know the nature of Communism. The mind that creates Communism will be found in the writings of its authentic exponents. Karl Marx admittedly was the seer and prophet of Communism. And his whole philosophy is an implicit denial of religion. Deny God, as Marx does, and reject the spirituality of the soul, and religion has not a leg to stand on. Religion, then, in a Capitalistic society becomes 'the opium of the people,' in other words, an illusion practised on the masses in order to justify existing conditions. Lenin repeats the teaching of Marx. Religion is the attempt to put the people asleep beneath the heel of Capitalism, and must be pursued as a dangerous drug and poison. The dream evoked by religion is one that fills the heavens with the bureaucratic hierarchy of earth, and asks man to bend the knee to God as Lord of all creation. At the Sixth World Congress held in Moscow, in 1928, the following pronouncement was made: 'Amongst the aims of the revolution the fight against religion, the opium of the people, holds a special place: it must be pursued inflexibly and systematically. Hence it must be excluded from education, and every association that is Catholic must be ruled out.'

The clash of Rome and Moscow, under this first heading, is the clash of two worlds. To be a Communist and a Catholic is a contradiction in terms. Communism stands for the abolition of the Christian religion: the Church has only one real aim, the realization of Christ's kingdom on earth. Nor is it possible to dissociate Communism as an economic

policy from Communism as a creed and as a philosophy of life: empty Communism of its anti-religious bias and it is a sorry economic theory that is not even rooted in the needs and instincts of human nature.

In this the social outlook of Catholicism is based on sound psychology: sound psychology will back up the right of private property rather than abolish it. The Church holds that the right of private property is based on the nature of things. She knows human nature also, and realizes that the greatest incentive to a healthy economic life is a sense of ownership. 'Every man has by nature,' wrote Leo XIII, 'the right to possess property of his own. This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation. . . . Man alone among animal creation is endowed with reason—it must be within his right to possess things, not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possession. . . .'

The Church, however, insists upon distinguishing between the right to private property, and the use of that right. The right to private property is legitimate. But the right of using one's property according to one's own fancy exclusively, and with no view to the common good, is not on the same footing. In this respect, the position of the present Holy Father in his Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, is clear and striking. He insists upon the 'social character' of ownership. 'Most helpful and worthy of all praise are the efforts of those who, in a spirit of harmony and with due regard for the traditions of the Church, seek to determine the precise nature

of the duties of property, and to define the boundaries imposed by the requirements of social life upon the right of ownership itself or upon its use.' From this it would follow that the State has power to set limits to the use of ownership ; it would also seem to follow that the State has something to say to the right of ownership itself. In other words, the conditions of ownership are not so absolutely rigid as to be outside the pale of all State-interference, and this goes to show the truth of the Thomistic view of the relative and derivative character of the natural right of private property. The Pope, however, is careful to point out : ' It belongs to what is called commutative justice, faithfully to respect the possession of others, not encroaching on the rights of another and thus exceeding one's rights of ownership. The putting of one's possessions to proper use, however, does not fall under this form of justice, but under certain other virtues ; and therefore it is " a duty not enforced by courts of justice." Hence it is idle to contend that the right of ownership and its proper use are bounded by the same limits ; and it is even less true that the very mis-use or even the non-use of ownership destroys or forfeits the right itself.'¹ ' The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man ; and the State has by no means the right to abolish it, but only to control its use and to bring it into harmony with the interests of the public good.'²

Ownership, then, has a twofold character, private and social. It follows that men in the use of their natural right must take into account the common

¹ *Quadragesimo Anno*, C.T.S. (London), p. 23.

² *Rerum Novarum*, p. 35.

good of society. 'But to define those duties,' says the Pope, 'when the need occurs and the natural law does not do so, is the function of the State. Provided that the natural and divine law be observed, the public authority, in view of the common good, can specify more accurately what is licit and illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions.'¹ From these words it will be clear that the Church does not regard herself as divinely commissioned to draw up a detailed programme of social reform, much less to declare that only one form of economic organization is compatible with Catholicism. But, in view of its insistence on the natural right of private property, it is easy to see that the Church would favour the multiplication of private property rather than its abolition.

The primary interest of the Church is man himself, and that interest is based on the dignity of human personality. She has always insisted that the worker is a person, and that human labour, therefore, is no mere chattel to be bought and sold in an open market. If labour needs capital, capital is not independent of labour. The Church has opposed the view that labour is a commodity to be subjected to the rigid laws of supply and demand. Labour is a human act, not a mere material commodity. When God said 'Thou shalt earn thy bread in the sweat of thy brow,' He was indicating the law of labour and insinuating that labour ought to bring the man sufficient for his life. Did not Leo XIII claim a living wage for the workers? Did he not also emphasize the right of the workers to organize themselves? Has not the present Pontiff proclaimed

¹ *Quadragesimo Anno*, p. 22.

that a share must be given both to the capitalist and the worker in the profits of business? Has he not said that it would be wrong for the wealthy business man to claim all the profits, just as it would be wrong for the propertyless wage-earners to demand for themselves all the fruits of production? The ideal of the present Holy Father is that, in the future, only a just share of the fruits of production should be allowed to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy, and that a share be given to the working man. 'The purpose is not that they become slack at their work, for man is born to labour as the bird to fly, but that by thrift they may increase their possessions, and by the prudent management of the same may be enabled to bear the family burden with greater ease and security, being freed from that hand-to-mouth uncertainty which is the lot of the proletarian. Thus they will not only be in a position to support life's changing fortunes, but will also have the reassuring confidence that, when their lives are ended, some little provision will remain for those whom they leave behind them. . . . Unless serious attempts be made, with all energy and without delay, to put these principles into practice, let nobody persuade himself that peace and tranquillity of human society can be effectively defended against the forces of revolution.'¹

The alternative of Christ or Communism is an alternative of Christ or chaos, for when hatred is invoked as an element of progress we are facing anarchy. The class hatred of Communism cannot bring peace or order. Even if all the relations of justice were satisfied there would still be something

¹ *Quadragesimo Anno.*

needed : there would be room for charity. ' Clearly charity cannot take the place of justice unfairly withheld. But even though a state of things be pictured in which everyone receives at least all that is his due, a wide field will nevertheless remain open for charity. For justice alone, even though most faithfully observed, can remove the cause of social strife but cannot bring about a union of hearts and minds.' But what is charity? It is simply another name for Jesus Christ who is the living Bond of men. In Christ there is organic unity for men, His members; outside of Christ there can be nothing but discord and chaos. ' Is Christ then divided?' Communism would have it so: the alternative for our day is Christ or Communism.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRIST : OUR GUEST

I

THE world in which we live is an inspiring annunciation. A thousand voices break upon our ears. They rise and swell in a tempest of music. But it is a music that is poignant with a wistful note of sadness like the sigh of winds dying away on distant seas. The earth laments. The earth bemoans its poverty. The earth bewails its imperfection. . . . Nothing is there that can boast enduring reality or unchanging state. The day that is born amidst the soft rays of rising sun dies down in darkness or in star-lit skies. The sun that grows to midday splendours sinks to rest amidst mourning clouds or in the cold grave of ocean's water. Spring that runs and riots with youthful vigour fails and droops until it drops into autumn graves.

Out from the heart of human life the same wistful notes re-echo to tell of fleeting, passing, transient things. What human joy escapes the sorrow that dogs its steps? No beauty is there in life that is just sheer beauty, fixed, unalterable : beauty is fleeting, passing, crumpling in our hands and taking the heart out of us in its passing. For all such things are the blossoming of human life, and the life of

man, so passionate and intense, must climb its curve and sink finally to rest. There is no life on earth that is just life, unborn and undying; all life must surrender to the embrace of death. Seek life wherever you will on earth, you will not come upon it. 'Life is not here,' cries out the earth, and the voice of earth is taken up until it swells from shore to shore. Out beyond the world's frontiers you must go if you seek for Life unborn and undying. For God is Life, and with Him lies the mystery of all living things.

Creation points to God; it announces Him. Yet how faltering is this annunciation of the living God. There is something in it of the vagueness of music's message. If God is the supreme Artist of all this loveliness and light and beauty that we see around us, then must He, like every artist, enjoy a secret hidden life all His own. But what has creation to say of that? Reason tells us that such a Being as God must be rich in knowledge: He must know. Likewise, such a Being, so perfectly Himself, cannot but affirm Himself in love. Further, it is unthinkable that the highest dignity on earth, personality, should not belong to God. But how is personality realized in God? Human reason cannot say. If God is God, then He must surpass our human understanding. A God that man could explain would be no God. The name of God is Mystery. In His presence the human mind must crouch and pay Him the homage of its silence. 'To whom, then, will ye liken God? . . . It is He that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth

them out as a tent to dwell in. . . . Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these. He bringeth out the hosts of the stars by number : He calleth them all by name by the greatness of His might, for He is strong in power ; not one faileth.' ' O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God,' cried out St. Paul. ' How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out.'

The gulf between the human mind and God's inscrutable Mystery is impassable from the human side. It is only God Himself who could have removed the veil that hides His inner life. See how carefully, tentatively we might say, did God remove that veil. Century after century went by, and only the slightest suggestion was there on the part of God as to His real nature and inner history. As He looked down upon the earth and saw the mass of men steeped in idolatry, worshipping at many shrines, He kept His chosen people by Him in their indomitable belief that He was the one true God. Only dimly did He foreshadow the wealth and opulence of His fecund inner life, so dimly that when the only-begotten Son, Jesus, appeared upon the earth the chosen people could not accept Him as their God ; they missed God's message. When on the threshold of His public life He went down into the river Jordan to be baptised by John, a Voice was heard from heaven : ' This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him. ' The Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. But all this passed unnoticed. To win them gradually to a belief in Him, Jesus was satisfied to call Himself ' Son of Man.' But Son of God He was, and to Him we owe the revelation

of the inner life of Godhead. 'No man,' said St. John, 'hath ever seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him.'¹ The purport of His revelation was that God is one in nature but that in God there are three Persons, equal and distinct, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Here was the God of the Christian religion, the Object of all cult and worship, the triune God.

'This dogma' (of the Most Holy Trinity), wrote Pope Leo XIII, 'is called by the Doctors of the Church "the substance of the New Testament," that is to say, the greatest of all mysteries, since it is the fountain and origin of them all. In order to know and contemplate this mystery, the angels were created in heaven and men upon earth. In order to teach more fully this mystery, which was but foreshadowed in the Old Testament, God Himself came down from the angels unto men. . . . Whosoever, then, writes or speaks of the Trinity must keep before his eyes the prudent warning of the Angelic Doctor: "When we speak of the Trinity, we must do so with caution and modesty, for, as St. Augustine saith, 'nowhere else are more dangerous errors made, or is research more difficult, or discovery more fruitful.''" The danger that arises is lest the divine persons be confounded one with the other in faith or worship, or lest the one nature in them be separated: for "This is the Catholic faith, that we should adore one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity." Therefore Our predecessor, Innocent XII, absolutely refused the petition of those who desired a special festival in

¹ John i, 18.

honour of God the Father. For, although the separate mysteries connected with the Incarnate Word are celebrated on certain fixed days, yet there is no special feast on which the Word is honoured according to His divine nature alone. And even the Feast of Pentecost was instituted in the earliest times, not simply to honour the Holy Ghost in Himself, but to commemorate His coming, or His external mission. And all this has been wisely ordained, lest from distinguishing the persons men should be led to distinguish the divine essence.¹

May we not, however, with all reverence endeavour to bring home to ourselves this ineffable mystery of Unity in Trinity? Is there no way of bringing it nearer to the level of our minds? Can we have no glimmering insight into the meaning and significance of this central mystery of our religion? If the triune God is Artist of creation, He must have put something of Himself into the work of His Hands: every artist does. Down through the ages there has been a line of saints and spiritual minds who seem to have discerned faint vestiges of the Holy Trinity. Was not theirs the true and simple vision of things? Is there not something of the Holy Trinity imbedded in the deepest nature of reality? To such eyes everything is triune, from the little wayside flower of stem and leaf and flower up to man, up to angel of intellect and will and nature. In man especially can we discern trinities in unity, for man expressly was created in God's own image. Man is a trinity of body, life and mind; he is a trinity of knowledge, love and action; his love is a trinity of desire, possession and fruition; his

¹ *The Great Encyclicals of Leo XIII* (New York), p. 424.

action is a trinity of will, the doing and the deed.

But it is in the human spirit itself that the reflection of the Holy Trinity shines out most clearly. Man's spirit is composed of intellect and will. By intellect he thinks: with will he loves. But when he thinks, whence comes his thought? He will not discover it outside himself fully made, nor yet within him ready-made. Thoughts are born in him in his contact with the world. In other words, thoughts are begotten out of the fecundity of his mind, they are generated. But thoughts are interior words, words uttered by the human spirit to itself. Can we not see in this a dim reflection of the divine begetting of the Word, the Second Person of the Father? Man's thoughts are many, passing, and distinct from his mind. But the Thought or Word of God is One, Unique. In that expression of Himself the Father pours forth His Whole Nature in the Son. The Son is the perfect image and expression of the Father, resembling Him in identity of Nature,¹ but begotten and by this relation distinct though equal. Here we have the type and exemplar of all life's fecundity. For, as Scripture says, 'Shall not I that made others bring forth children Myself not bring forth? Shall I who gave generation to others Myself be barren?' No, 'as the Father hath life in Himself so He gave to the Son to have life in Him.'²

This divine begetting by way of knowledge, however, does not exhaust the inner nature of the Godhead. There is more in God than thought, there is love. But love, as we know, has two terms,

¹ John x, 30.

² John v, 26.

it is something reciprocal. Between one who loves and one who is loved there is the bond of their common love. Love is not in the one merely nor in the other : it is in both. In this common love of one another the Father and the Son are drawn together ; the Father and the Son are both entirely in one another ; the Father forgets Himself in His love of the Son, and the Son comes back in love to the Father. And in this excess of their mutual love, both Father and Son breathe forth their common love in a Third Person, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, then, is the Breath that issues from the love that united Father and Son : He closes the cycle of God's inner life.

II

Such was the dazzling revelation of the Godhead cast by Christ upon the world. Men had believed in one supreme and awful God. Now they were told something of God's own inner life and were asked to believe that God was three in person though one in nature. We who have received that faith at birth can scarcely realize the magnitude of its mystery. But down through the ages men have erred regarding it. The Church has had a pressing fight. And why ? Because the dogma of the Holy Trinity is absolutely central. It is the Mystery of our faith as Pope Leo XIII has said, the Object of all cult and worship.

Further, the dogma of the Holy Trinity is one not so remote from human life as many Christians even seem to think. True, it is to contemplate that Mystery for all eternity that man and angel have been

created. But here and now it is a Mystery directly concerned with human life. On last analysis, our human lives, in the light of Christ's revelation, are destined to be episodes in the life of the Holy Trinity. To entertain a false idea of this Mystery, then, is to be in error regarding our own human lives themselves.

What is the basis for this impressive view of human mortal lives? Briefly, it may be stated thus: We have been destined by God ultimately to enter into the society of the Three Divine Persons in heaven; to make that possible we have been invited here below to initiate the life of heaven; and if in eternity we are to enter into the life of the Holy Trinity, then in time must the life of the Holy Trinity enter into us.

Faith has cast aside the veils that hide God's inner life; faith has thrown open the portals of God's own sanctuary. Faith tells us further that it is not merely as an Object of contemplation the Holy Trinity stands revealed: we have been invited to enter in, to share with God His inner life, to take our part in the eternal romance of the God-head. Left to ourselves, to our natural resources, God would have remained entirely inaccessible to us in His inner life; He would have remained a universe unknown, remote, unexplored; we should have known Him simply as He is mirrored outside Himself, just as we see the hidden sun's reflections in the clouds at evening. But precisely because for all eternity we are called to contemplate that inner essence must we here below be endowed with God's own light and life if we are adequately to be equipped for such an eternity.

In all its ambitious flights the human mind could not have thought of such a destiny. We are startled when we think of the intimacy with God that it implies. We who are pilgrims and aliens have been called by God to enter in within Him and share His life. We cannot well express it. It is like the opening of a door at night, a call uttered in the darkness, a timid entering into a room warm with the glow from the hearth of God's undying life. The darkness of sin was upon the world. The gates of paradise had clanged. Man had gone out from God into the cold bleak earth. But the Son of God, like a giant, came dispelling darkness. 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law : that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Sons of God ! What by nature and by Hypostatic Union Jesus Christ was, Son of God, that are we by adoption. So similar to His begetting in the bosom of the Father is our adopted sonship that Christ is called the First-born of many brethren. 'For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son ; that He might be the First-born of many brethren.'¹ The Word left the bosom of the Holy Trinity to enter the ranks of mankind so that men might be introduced to the very life of Godhead.

The word 'adoption' must not mislead us. That word is the consecrated word of Scripture intended to emphasize the gratuitous character of God's condescension and the absence of all right on our parts to the inheritance of God's own nature. But the word is not strong enough to express what has

¹ Rom. viii, 29.

taken place. The adopted child may be taken into the bosom of a family, yet, for all that, the blood of the family does not run in its veins. But this may not be said of our divine adoption, for the very blood of Christ, as it were, runs in the veins of Christians. Is not that the force of Christ as the Vine of which we are the branches? We must examine the basis of our adoption, then, if we are to grasp its intrinsic character. For the basis of our divine adoption is nothing less than a communion of life with Christ, a communion of life that is founded in the stupendous nuptials of the Word with human nature in the Incarnation, and in the marriage of Christ and His Church in Redemption.

Scripture is filled with this tremendous idea of God's espousals with human nature. Prophet after prophet spoke for God of His intentions. Words of unutterable tenderness were expressed, words that had to await the fulness of time for their fulfilment. 'I will espouse thee to me forever,' He says through the mouth of Osee, 'and I will espouse thee to Me in justice, and judgement, and in mercy, and in commiserations, and I will espouse thee to Me in faith, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.'¹ 'I have remembered thee, pitying thy youth, and the love of thy espousals, when thou followedst me in the desert.'² 'For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and mourning in spirit and as a wife cast off from her youth.'³ This was the Jewish people with whom God contracted special alliance, and to them He said: 'For this is the testament which I will make with

¹ Osee ii, 19, 20.² Jer. ii, 2.³ Is. liv, 6

the house of Israel, I will give My laws unto their mind, and in their heart will write them, and I will be their God and they will be My people.¹ When His chosen people sinned, He reminded them : ‘ Daughter, thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers ; nevertheless, return to Me and I will receive thee.’² And to enhance the value of His invitation, He adds : ‘ Therefore, at the least from this time, call to Me, Thou art my Father and the guide of my virginity.’³

But the Jewish people did not take God for the Guide of their virginity, for when the Son of God came as the Bridegroom of humanity they did not accept Him. This had been foretold. The prophet Osee made the utterance full of hope for peoples outside the chosen people : ‘ I will say to that which was not My people, thou art My people, and they will say, Thou art my God.’⁴ When Christ appeared upon the banks of the Jordan, the Baptist saluted in Him the Bridegroom. ‘ You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said I am not the Christ. . . . He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled.’⁵ When the disciples were censured by the Pharisees, Christ vindicated them : ‘ Can the children of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them ; but the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they shall fast.’⁶ And when His blood was spilled on Calvary, it was His ransom for

¹ Cited by St. Paul, Heb. viii, 10.

² Jer. iii, 4.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ Osee ii, 24. ⁵ John iii, 29. ⁶ Matt. ix, 15.

His bride, the Church. 'Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it. That He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life. That He might present to Himself a glorious spouse, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.'¹ 'For just as God,' remarks St. Augustine, 'put Adam into a profound sleep in order that Eve would originate from him, so Jesus sleeps on the Cross in order that the Church, the second Eve, would be formed from Him. Whilst Adam slept, God drew a rib from his side to build the first woman on it; so likewise whilst Jesus slept in death, of which Adam's sleep was a figure, the Roman soldier opened His side with a lance, that the blood and water flowing from it would form the sacraments to sanctify His Church, and make her His Spouse.' As we are members of that Church, it is with us that these espousals of Christ were contracted: He is the Bridegroom of every Christian, for before Christ we are neither male nor female but one humanity, a Bride ransomed by His blood.

It is not difficult, then, to see that, by virtue of these nuptials with the Son, the new humanity, the Bride of the Word, has become the child and daughter of the Father. To consummate these nuptials, the Holy Spirit, the common Breath of Father and Son, descends upon the nascent Church to vivify it and draw it within the circle of the Holy Trinity. Recall that coming. A little band of men and women were huddled together in fear and trembling in an upper room in Jerusalem. Sud-

¹ Eph. v, 25-32.

denly a mighty wind shook the place. Parted tongues of fire were seen to descend upon them. The Spirit of Christ had come. New life and energy entered into them. They went forth intoxicated with the power of Christ's new Presence.

But Pentecost is not of the past merely. It may not now happen with the same pageantry of external signs. There is not now the same necessity for extraordinary powers of miracle, of prophecy, of tongues. But in Baptism there is a pentecost: the Spirit of Christ begins to inhabit a human soul. What is of importance now is not, as St. Paul so clearly indicates, faith or prophecy, or miracle, but that state of the soul called love or charity, the state of the soul that means union with Christ and communion of life with Him, sanctifying grace. 'If I speak with the tongues of angels and of men and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'¹ And what precisely is this Charity? Actively it means the love of God in Christ with all that this supreme thing implies in life. But as a state of soul it means the presence of Christ's life in the soul, the presence of Christ's Spirit in humanity, in a word, the most stupendous thing on earth, the in-dwelling of the Holy Trinity in the souls of the just.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii, 1-13.

For this simple statement of an awful fact do not take the word of man. But listen to the word of God Himself. 'In this we know,' says St. John, 'that we abide in Him and He in us : because He hath given us of His Spirit.'¹ 'The charity of God,' says St. Paul, 'is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.'² Again, 'Know you not, that you are the temples of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.'³ But where the Holy Spirit is there also are the Father and the Son. For Christ insisted that while it was expedient for the disciples that He should remove from them His bodily presence, yet this departure was simply a prelude to the greater intimacy of His Presence to them as the Guest of their souls.

'Believe Me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. . . . If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Advocate, that He may be with you for ever. . . . I will not leave you orphans ; I am coming to you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth Me no more ; but ye shall behold Me, because I live, and ye shall live. In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. . . . If anyone loveth Me, he will keep My word, and My Father shall love him, and We will come to him and make our abode with him.'⁴

These words of Christ are their own best commentary. When theologians come to interpret them, we fear and tremble for their very literalness. For though we know by reason that God is every-

¹ 1 John iv, 13.

³ 1 Cor. iii, 16 ; vi, 19.

² Rom. v, 5.

⁴ John xiv.

where, and therefore also in the depths of our souls, there is something special in this new Presence. Scripture is also aware of God's ubiquity, but it is no less emphatic as to the special Presence of the Holy Trinity in the souls of the just. It is not a question, then, merely of God's general presence, but of the actual in-dwelling of the Holy Trinity, the Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Three interpretations have been offered by outstanding theologians, but the most convincing, because the most literal, is that given by Aquinas. Vasquez seems to underestimate this Presence of the Holy Trinity. For him it is not such, for instance, as to render God present in His essence, were He not already present by virtue of His immensity, and this theologian seems to reduce it to man's knowledge and love of God either actual or habitual. 'The true explanation,' says Vasquez, 'is that God being already present to us reveals Himself by an additional effect, His grace. And as by appropriation grace is attributed to the Holy Spirit it is said that the Spirit Himself comes into the souls of the just.' This is not satisfying for the simple reason that such a presence may be accounted for by God's causality and by a certain vicarious presence of God by means of man's knowledge and love. And then have we not already lost the glorious literalness of Scripture? Suarez, on the other hand, goes so far as to say that if God were not already present by His immensity the effect of grace would be to make Him present. But this is extreme. St. Thomas solves the question by saying that the presence of the Holy Trinity is a literal fact, it is a new and special presence, but

it presupposes God's general presence necessarily. For what is the difference precisely between the two presences? Is it not, as we have already tried to suggest, that by grace we have access to the inner life of God? In the natural order God would be present, but His inner life, the Trinity of Persons, would be a universe closed to us. The result of the new Presence is that God is given to us as an Object to be known experimentally, to be *felt*, as it were.

When it comes to describing this Presence, then I had rather listen to the mystic than to a mere theologian inexperienced in the intimacies of holiness. 'He that loveth not,' says St. John, 'knoweth not God; for God is charity.'¹ St. Teresa's allegory of the Interior Castle was written by one who knew and felt the Presence. She compares the soul to a castle containing many chambers, all surrounding a central point, where God dwells. 'There may be some, perhaps, who will laugh at me,' she writes, 'and will say that all this is common knowledge, and they will be right; but it is not the less true that it was some time before it became clear to me. I knew very well that I had a soul, but, alas! having blinded my own eyes by clinging to the vanities of life, I failed to comprehend either the dignity of that soul, or the honour which God bestowed upon it by coming to dwell in the centre thereof. For if I had known then what I know now—viz., that so great a King dwelt in the little palace of my soul—I should not so often have left Him quite alone; sometimes, at least, I should have kept Him company, and have taken more pains to keep my soul free from the imperfections which

¹ 1 John iv, 8.

defiled it. I will only add that he who desires to acquire this habit (of adverting to the Guest) should never tire in his efforts gradually to obtain the mastery over himself by withdrawing his senses into himself. . . . In conversation let him remember that there is, at the bottom of his heart, someone to whom he can speak ; when listening, let him not forget that he should listen inwardly to Him who speaks most closely to him. And, finally, let him consider that, if he so will, he need never more be separated from that Divine Companion . . .¹

III

Could anything be more intimate, more stupendous, more consoling? 'I will not leave you orphans ; I will come to you. . . . We will come and make our abode with you.' These are the words of Christ Himself, the promise of the unfailing God. We have His word for it that He will be our Guest, that He will come and make His abode with us ; that He will shed the light of His Godhead upon our darkness ; that He will infuse His strength into our human weakness ; that in pain and sorrow and desolation He will be our Comforter ; that in life's dark places He will be a hidden Manna upon which we may be nourished to walk in darkness with firm step. No matter how vividly you picture this Presence of Christ, the Guest, whether it be within you or beside you, your fancy will fall short of the Reality. St. Catherine of Siena felt that He walked beside her. St. Elizabeth of the Holy Trinity was so conscious of His Presence that as

¹ *Way of Perfection*, Ch. XXX.

she recited her office she would turn to Him in saying the 'Glory be to the Father,' and instead of saying 'to the Son' would turn to Him and say 'to You.' St. Teresa advised her sisters thus: 'Keep yourself, then, constantly by the side of your divine Master, with an ardent desire to learn that which He has to teach you, and in a short time He will know how to make of you a disciple worthy of Himself.'¹ For who could walk so constantly with Christ and not ultimately be like Him, and that is perfection?

But let us look more broadly at the significance of this Presence in the souls of the just.

Our human lives, I have said, can be veritable episodes in the life of the Holy Trinity. It was to share that life with men that the Second Person came down to earth. He who was the eternal God lived as a man in time. But what we must not forget is that even the human nature of Christ could not exhaust or live out, as it were, in an adequate manner the infinite life of Godhead. His human nature was finite, it was of a particular race; His life covered but a period of time, and its drama was against the background of Judea. In death Christ's empire was co-extensive with the world and His Kingdom was to be realized through human lives. May we not see in this the taking up of our finite personalities, the selection of a myriad human lives, in order to find a wider extension of the Life that was His by Hypostatic Union? Without for a moment confounding two such different things as hypostatic union and the union of the Christian with Christ by sanctifying grace, may we not say that

¹ *Way of Perfection*, Ch. XXVII.

Christ would willingly 'assume' all human personalities in order to pour out the life of Godhead that He has from the Father? The union of grace is no mere moral union, it is a union and communion of life. By means of it Christ draws us to Him, He draws us into the cycle of God's own inner life, that through us this glory of Life might fill the earth.

In terms of personality this union is effected, as we have seen, by the indwelling of the Holy Trinity. But this indwelling of the Holy Trinity means that the Three Persons have come to make Their home within us. But is not that a penetration of time by eternity and an influx of divine life into human lives? The Holy Trinity does not cease to be Itself when It has chosen our souls as Its abode. But the Holy Trinity is Itself in Its eternal activity. For God *to be* is to act: and that infinite all-embracing Act, which is the generation of the Son by the Father and the procession of the Spirit from the Father and Son, is precisely the being of God. If the Holy Trinity, then, take up Their abode in our souls, that must mean that They are active in our souls, in other words, the eternal life of the Holy Trinity, with Its generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit, is taking place within the souls of the just. To say that human souls are the theatres of this eternal activity fails to express the junction of human and divine. Such a mode of expression is impressive, but the reality of the union of mortal lives and the life of God is more impressive still. Something of this ineffable thing is caught by saying that our human lives become episodes in the life of Godhead, for then we have

surmised something of the taking up of human mortal lives into the eternal generation of the Son and the timeless procession of the Spirit.

This is the most stupendous fact of all our religion. The Holy Trinity lives in me, and in that ceaseless activity my life is somehow mysteriously concerned. My life is not outside the life of Godhead, but in it, and the eternal begetting of the Son and breathing of the Spirit is not remote from it. Just think of it. Christ still lives. He lives in me, and by Him I live out in time the eternal life of Godhead. Saints there have been to whom it has been given to see dimly the greater Life in which they felt themselves immersed: St. Teresa descried within her the Holy Trinity. But not to Teresa alone but to every Christian does the Holy Trinity come and reside as long as grace abides within them. The mass of Christians are unconscious of this Presence. But that is because their lives are filled with passing interests, with distractions that draw them abroad from the home of their own souls; they do not possess their own souls, let alone the Triune God within them. But conscious or not the Holy Trinity abides in souls that are in the state of sanctifying grace. All the heroism and sanctity of saints, all the great and noble things that have been ever accomplished in the name of religion, all those lives that dazzle mortal eyes with the splendour of high achievement, these are things that flow into human lives from the Abyss of God within Christian souls.

For us mortals of flesh and blood the central Person of that Trinity is Jesus Christ. He is in the Father and the Spirit is His Paraclete. He it was

who promised that we should not be left orphans. He is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. Within the depths of our souls and spirits He resides: *dulcis hospes animæ*. Because He is God, He is ever-active. Listen to His Voice: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock, and if any man will hear My voice and open to Me the door I will come in and sup with him and he with Me.' Mark the intimacy of that invitation and promise: 'I will sup with Him.' Think who it is that will sup with you: Christ, the Man-God who appealed to saint and sinner, Christ the most beautiful, Christ who was wont to visit the friends, Martha and Mary, whom He loved, Christ who can satisfy. Ordinarily we are not 'at home' to Christ: our lives are on the streets and the highways. But Christ awaits us. Is there anyone who is friendless? Let him think of Christ, the Comforter. Is there someone for whom life is desolate, someone made for affection, yet unloved, uncared for, one whose home is empty, with not a voice to gladden this home-coming, then let him think of Christ who awaits him. Christ will speak if we will but listen. Christ will gladden if we will but turn to Him. . . . 'I stand at the door and knock. . . .' Every advance in holiness is the opening of a door whereby Christ will enter and take possession of our lives. Do not bolt that door, but let Him enter with the Father and the Spirit that They may abide with us, for we are destined to abide with Them for all eternity.

We are 'temples of eternity.'¹ Christ did not

¹ It is a pleasure to refer to an inspiring book of this title by Fr. Stewart, S.J., *Temples of Eternity*, London.

come to earth to reside merely in temples of stone, but in temples of flesh and blood. The tabernacle He desires is not merely the tabernacle of the Church, but that of human bodies. Christ is not satisfied with the altar-stone of the Church upon which to offer sacrifice: He desires the altars of human hearts. The sacrifice He would offer is the sacrifice of lives that may be ascribed to Him, so good are they and holy and pure. For as the Father worketh so does the Son even now, deifying mortal lives and expressing Himself again in glory to the Father through the frail mortal bodies of Christians who are one with Him. There are only two places where Christ will not dwell, the hell of Satan and the soul of the sinner. His ministers are Christians who live in Him: through them He will establish the kingdom of God on earth, for He holds court with them if they but listen. 'I stand at the door and knock, and if any man will hear My voice and open to Me the door I will come in and sup with him and he with Me. . . . And if any man keep My commandments I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.' This is the voice of Jesus that can hush the poignant voice of all creation. We need not plunge into Nature, or flee with the winds, or listen to the winds that die on distant seas. . . . Christ is nearer. . . . Christ is within us. . . . Christ is our Guest.

CHAPTER IX

CHRIST IS KING

I

A FITTING conclusion to the series of discourses to which you have been listening will be found in the conception of Jesus Christ as King. From the outset we have been considering the unfolding of His life and Personality from the moment when He first appeared amongst His people. We have seen Him run counter to two prevailing ideas in His time, the legalistic view of religion held by the Pharisees and the hopes entertained by the people of an external kingdom. He condemned the Pharisees and insisted on the inwardness of true religion which demanded adoration of the Father 'in spirit and in truth.' The hopes of a purely external temporal kingdom He also left unfulfilled. 'And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said: The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say: Behold here, or behold there. For lo, the kingdom of God is within you.'¹ However this phrase 'within you' be interpreted, it is abundantly clear that Christ Himself insisted on the inwardness of the kingdom

¹ Luke xvii, 20 seq. Cf. Lemonnyer, P., *The Theology of the New Testament*, p. 41.

of God, an inwardness that would demand nothing less than a re-birth of spirit as He plainly told Nicodemus. He had frequently insisted on the inward character of human nature and recognized that things of value as well as of evil emanated really from man's spirit. If God's kingdom was to appear on earth it must first take hold of man's mind and heart, for all man's kingdoms on earth are ultimately kingdoms built by human thought and human desire.

A modern school of non-Catholic theologians would hold that Christ Himself was to some extent deceived about the advent of God's kingdom on earth. They maintain that our Lord believed the end of the world was at hand and that the kingdom of God would come down from heaven in His generation. It is not difficult to see the error of such an interpretation. The whole question centres in the nature of the kingdom of God as preached by Christ. Is there evidence to show that in His mind it was a purely celestial thing which would descend miraculously from the heavens at a definite point of time? Or was it rather a kingdom which has its roots in our world, destined to grow and develop like a grain of mustard seed or like any living organism, but which will reach full maturity only in a world to come? Are we to believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was just an apocalyptic who shared the prejudices of His time and believed that the day of the Lord was at hand?

For us who believe that Jesus Christ was God such errors on His part are simply out of the question. But apart from this aspect of the matter, a glance at the Gospel-narratives shows that Christ

was no mere apocalyptic. His aim was the establishment of God's kingdom in the men and women of His day, the Baptist going before Him to prepare the way. Nor was Christ's thought limited to His own people only ; He envisaged 'the poor and the afflicted' and those outside the Law. Above all, He insisted on the inwardness of God's kingdom, the necessity for its taking root in minds and spirits, for He knew that its emergence in the world of time and space would depend on this.

The first element in the establishment of this new kingdom of God on earth was emphatically the acceptance of Jesus Christ Himself. 'No man cometh to the Father except by Him.' 'There is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a redemption for all.'¹ 'This is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner.'² Christ was Himself the Kingdom of God on earth and without His mediation no beginning or progress could be made. He told them solemnly that with John the Baptist the old era went out,³ that a greater than Solomon or Jonas was in their midst,⁴ and that with Him the new era opens. In His last discourse to the Apostles He speaks of His authority and refers to the consequences of rejecting Him. When He was led before Pilate, the Roman magistrate, and was greeted with the question : 'Art Thou then a king ?' He replied : 'Thou sayest I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world ; that I should give testimony

¹ Tim. ii, 5.

² Acts iv, 8-12.

³ Matt. xi, 11.

⁴ Matt. xii, 41, 42.

to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.¹

In these words of Christ before Pilate we have the climax of His teaching on the kingdom of God on earth. He came to give testimony to it, to be its Founder. In the beginning of His career less emphasis was placed upon Himself, His identity and real character. At every stage the Synoptics reveal Him occupied with the idea of the kingdom to be established. 'Jesus went about teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,' says St. Matthew. St. Mark gives the impression that Christ is actually striving to divert attention from Himself. But all the time the thought is there that the coming of the kingdom is bound up with Christ Himself. 'If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.' The establishment of this kingdom then would depend on the acceptance of Him, for Christ was King. As God, royalty over all creation was His by inheritance. From the very first moment of His conception He was hypostatically united to the Godhead; He was anointed King. In virtue of this anointing His honour was so great that angels and men and the universe entire were at His feet in adoration. Christ was, as St. Paul says, 'the appointed heir of all things.'²

But a further title to Kingship was to accrue to Christ by right of conquest. This would be when He would have ransomed humanity in His blood on Calvary. 'You were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled.'³ Christ pur-

¹ John xviii, 37.

² Heb. i, 2.

³ 1 Pet. i, 18.

chased humanity 'with a great price.'¹ The kingdom of God on earth then was the Church, Christ's Spouse, which He won for Himself on Calvary. Primarily it would be a Church with the great spiritual and invisible life that He would communicate to it, but He has also in His lifetime prepared the external and visible body that would receive His life. He instituted a hierarchy, giving Peter His own power, and placing under him, as head, the Apostles and their successors as part of His divine institution. To Peter He promised primacy of jurisdiction,² and in time He vested in him the fulness of monarchical power in the Church.³ But also to the Apostles He gave power to govern. To them, as to St. Peter, He said: 'As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you,'⁴ and likewise: 'Going therefore, teach ye all nations.'⁵ Side by side with Peter, though subordinate, the Apostles and their successors form an essential part of the Church founded by Jesus Christ. To that visible society, whose primary interest would be religious, Christ promised the assurance of His Holy Spirit⁶ and He made of it for every man a condition of eternal salvation that he should hear and obey the commands of this divinely established hierarchy.⁷

II

The heresy of our epoch is the denial of this Kingship of Christ in both its senses. In practical

¹ 1 Cor. vi, 20.

³ John xxi, 15-17.

⁵ Matt. xxviii, 19.

⁷ Mark xvi, 15-16; Luke xxiv, 25-28; John xx, 21.

² Matt. xvi, 13-19.

⁴ John xx, 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*

life His Lordship over nations and peoples is unacknowledged; our culture which owes so much to Him has been divorced from Him. The history of our epoch is a history of a break with Christ, for whatever moral faults may have marred the Middle Ages, allegiance to Christ was then acknowledged. There has been a general secularization or laicisation of life in cities, in institutions, in states and nations.

Practical life, however, is merely the outward expression of ideas and evil practice is symptomatic of erroneous theory. The Protestant Reformation, by breaking with the Church, brought a breach with Christ, for all its emphasis on His Personality. The idea of a Church invisible, of an isolated religious relation of the individual to God, was a beginning in a false direction. Grant that, and religion is on the wane, soon it becomes a purely private matter, and then the social side of life is emptied of Christian inspiration. The nineteenth century with its radical divorce of religion from public affairs is the natural climax. In such a century, as we have seen, the appearance of Bolshevism is not so strange: it is almost an inevitable issue.

The official declaration by the Church of Christ's Kingship is intended to combat this practice of secularizing all departments of life and to remind us of the true theory that must obtain in man's relation with God. The theory that Christ is King is nothing new in the Church. What is new is the institution of a special Feast whereby we celebrate Christ's Kingship. Alive to the needs of our epoch, the present Holy Father has selected the Feast of Christ the King to proclaim His rights because of His

conviction that a Feast has greater efficacy than any document. In this the Holy Father is in line with the great tradition of the Church which down the ages taught her children dogmas and moral truths by means of her liturgy. 'For people are instructed in the truths of faith, and brought to appreciate the inner joys of religion more effectually by the annual celebration of Our sacred mysteries than by any pronouncement, however weighty, of the teaching of the Church. Such pronouncements usually reach only a few of the more learned among the faithful; feasts reach them all; the former speak but once, the latter speak every year—in fact, for ever. The Church's teaching affects the mind primary; her feasts affect both mind and heart, and have a salutary effect upon the whole of man's nature. Man is composed of body and soul, and he needs the external festivities so that the sacred rites, in all their beauty and variety, may stimulate him to drink more deeply of the fountain of God's teaching, that he may make it a part of himself and use it with profit for his spiritual life.'¹

Historically it was the particular needs of each epoch that frequently determined the selection of special feasts. These needs were not infrequently blatantly demonstrated by heresies that appeared within the Church. But the heresy of our time is 'the plague of secularism, its errors and impious activities. This evil spirit, as you are well aware, Venerable Brethren, has not come into being in one day; it has long lurked beneath the surface. The empire of Christ over all nations was rejected. The right which the Church has from Christ Himself,

¹ Encyclical Letter.

to teach mankind, to make laws, to govern peoples in all that pertains to eternal salvation, that right was denied. Then gradually the religion of Christ came to be likened to false religions and to be placed ignominiously on the same level with them. It was then put under the power of the State and tolerated more or less at the whim of princes and rulers. Some men went further and wished to set up in the place of God's religion a natural religion consisting in some instinctive affection of the heart. There were even some nations who thought they could dispense with God and that their religion should consist in impiety and the neglect of God.¹ What was the result? 'A society, in a word, shaken to its foundations and on its way to ruin.'

The Pope has here indicated the steps of the incline which lead to the denial of all religion whatsoever. The first step in that descent was the view of religion as entirely spiritual and personal. Man is a composite of soul and body, man has one life that has a personal and a social facet, and when he tries such a purely spiritual experiment as a private and personal religion he is on the way to empty religion out of his life entirely. When man plays the angel he ends merely by being less than man. If Christ is the sole Exponent of life's aim and purpose, Christ also must legislate for life's concrete forms in its religious institutions. That His kingdom, even on earth, should be of spirit only, affecting individuals in their naked relations to God, is as absurd as it is untrue. As a matter of history Christ founded a Church with visible Head. But in the very nature of things we are

¹ Encyclical Letter.

tempted to say that had not Christ so acted this Church must in some form have evolved. Man is no pure spirit, nor is he a pure isolated individual, and, therefore, a kingdom whose roots have taken hold in the human spirit must inevitably show itself visibly as a social institution. Those who complain of the institutional side of religion, men who like Jean Jacques Rousseau cry out against the many things and people that come between them and God, are precisely those who do not in their hearts want a revelation at all. It would be mere impertinence on their part to think of a private revelation made to them. We come before God just as we are, that is, not as isolated individuals or pure spirits, but as a multiplication of many held together in the solidarity of a single human race. In one man humanity fell in the sight of God; in Christ humanity rose again. But the Church instituted by Christ does not come between us and God, any more than Christ Himself comes between us and God. Christ is God's appointed Mediator; the Church is the official bridge between Christ Himself and men. He who will not hear the Church then must fall into the hands of the living God, whose breadth of Providence alone can find a way of linking up those who in good faith cannot walk the bridge that leads to Christ and eternal life. That is why so many, not adhering to the visible Church on earth, belong to it without knowing it: they belong to what we call the soul of the Church.

III

The Apostles knew that the embryonic kingdom of God on earth, the outlines of which were fixed

by Christ in His own lifetime, would grow and develop after the Master's death. They awaited a new accession of vitality to descend upon them. The disciples on the road to Emmaus may not have been clear in their ideas but they too witnessed to the hope that Christ 'should have redeemed Israel.'¹ But Christ had unmistakably filled the last moments of His life with the promise of the Spirit that would come. This promise remained with them, and in an upper room they were awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit.

It was the plain conviction of early Christianity that this promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. Redemption as an objective fact had been accomplished on Calvary. The world had been reconciled to God. A new life had been won for humanity and a new era was about to open. But the earth was ignorant of its redemption. The secret was in the keeping of the few who had been taught by Christ, and a little band of men and women were the holders of this secret. These were hidden away in an upper room in Jerusalem. Their whole attitude was one of expectancy and awaiting.

Suddenly the event took place. Parted tongues of fire were seen to descend upon them. The Spirit of Christ had come. New life, new energy, laid hold of them, entered into them. They hurried forth like men intoxicated to teach the religion of Christ, to proclaim His rights.

This was the nucleus of the nascent Church. A work as super-human as redemption was before it. A little band of men faced a world, a world extensive

¹ Luke xxiv, 19.

in space, a world that would grow with timeless age. To all creeds and classes, to men of every age and clime, to minds enlightened and minds uncultured, to the king on his throne and the peasant in his cottage, the message of Christ had to be taught. The mystery of His Cross had to be expounded, a mystery that ran counter to human thoughts and merely natural ideals. The way to real life was henceforth the road that led to Calvary. Humanity has no self-constituted goal of life. The only humanism recognized by God is the humanism of the Cross. On Calvary a stream of blood, like a torrent of God's goodness, flowed down to vitalize human nothingness and endow the body corporate of humanity with divine life. But this new life is conditioned by acceptance of Christ as King and by allegiance to Him as Victor.

Christ is King. He must reign in our minds by truth. Truth cannot conflict with truth, and fealty to Christ will not cramp the vital energy of our minds. Intelligence is never more itself than when in man it recognizes its limitations. The human mind is finite in its grasp and it fulfills its highest purpose when it humbly admits that mystery lies beyond its powers. If God is not Mystery, then He is not God, and when the truths of Christ surpass us, they do not crush us. Intelligence of no matter what limited capacity points to Intelligence, and the human mind may rest confident that for the Supreme Intelligence mystery is knowledge and the supernatural is natural. Truth is one and the faculty of truth is intellect. Faith and reason then are not in conflict. Both are participations in a knowing

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that is divine, more directly divine in the knowledge of faith than in that of science. Christ *is* Truth, King by right in the empire of truth. No truth can light up the mind that has not some relation to Christ.

THE END

